

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Walter Simon Newman:  
An Oral History

Interviews conducted by  
Martin Meeker and Julie Stein  
in 2010

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## Table of Contents—Walter Simon Newman

### Interview 1: June 9, 2010

Tape 1 1

Family background and history of town of Newman, CA – History of Simon Newman Company – Upbringing in San Francisco – Social circle of prominent San Francisco Jewish families, Concordia Argonaut Club – Education at San Francisco public schools – Largely shielded from the Great Depression – Spending summers working in Newman – Dating in high school.

Tape 2 18

Experience studying Animal Husbandry at UC Davis – Memories of Pearl Harbor – Joining army after college – Military training - Becoming commander of Company C – Participation in Normandy Invasion in June 1944 – Shot through the lung and gravely wounded in Saint Lo – Evacuation and convalescing in military hospitals.

### Interview 2: June 18, 2010

Tape 3 38

Volunteer work on behalf of veterans, Veterans Research Institute, Troops to College – Attending reunion of 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division – Receiving French Legion of Honor Medal in 2009 in France, traveling to Omaha Beach for ceremony – Going into business managing a women’s millinery company with a close friend for a year – Moving to Newman, CA to take over the Newman Company.

Tape 4 51

Challenges of returning to “normalcy” after the war – Meeting his wife, Ellen Magnin – Ellen took over as head merchant of Joseph Magnin when her mother died – Wedding at the Fairmont Hotel - Joining Joseph Magnin company – Developing store credit card business – Managing Stonestown store – Joseph Magnin’s reputation and embrace of youth in 1950s – Innovative advertising – Story of the founding of I. Magnin – Cyril Magnin revamped Joseph Magnin to focus on youth in 1950s and 1960s – Popular holiday gift boxes – Making real estate deals for new store locations.

### Interview 3: June 24, 2010

#### Tape 5

66

West Coast expansion plans for Joseph Magnin stores – Range of stores – Markdown strategy – Relationships with local vendors as well as New York buying office – Lake Tahoe store – Lavish opening store in Las Vegas in the Desert Inn owned by Jewish mobster, Moe Dalitz – friendship with Moe Dalitz – Stores in Southern California, Hawaii- Joseph Magnin Board of Directors – Deciding not to expand into Pacific Northwest

#### Tape 6

82

Variations in store architecture and interior design – discusses competition from other stores – Joseph Magnin dressed Lynda Johnson for her wedding – Role in labor negotiations, reluctantly turning Joseph into a union shop in 1960s – Hiring of women, racial minorities – Decision to go public in 1960- Sale of Joseph Magnin to Amfac in 1968 –Walking out on 5-year contract after a year because of disagreements with new management.

### Interview 4: July 9, 2010

#### Tape 7

103

Poor management at Amfac – New CEO Bob Barry replaced Cyril Magnin – conflict between Ellen Magnin Newman and Joseph Magnin’s board after the sale – Imagines Joseph Magnin’s future if they had not sold to Amfac – Joseph Magnin’s legacy in retail - Working as vice president I. Magnin after walking out of Joseph Magnin – changes to San Francisco’s retail landscape, disappearance of family-owned stores – Cyril Magnin’s involvement in politics – Supporting Joe Alioto’s mayoral campaign – Appointed as president of the San Francisco Planning Commission – Relationship between commissioners and elected officials – Developing a comprehensive plan for San Francisco’s future growth with Allan Jacobs.

#### Tape 8

117

Controversy surrounding the building of the Transamerica Pyramid – Allan Jacobs opposed the building, Mayor Alioto strongly supported it – defeat of US Steel Tower proposal – Increasing strength of neighborhood groups and anti-growth groups in 1970s – Changes to San Francisco under Mayor Moscone – Appointed to Redevelopment Commission in 1981 – Redevelopment projects in the Fillmore and Yerba Buena.

Interview 5: June 9, 2010

Tape 9

138

Tenure as president of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco – Merging the de Young Museum and the Legion of Honor in 1972 – Experimenting with opening a third museum in downtown San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum Downtown – Establishing relationships with the Metropolitan Museum – Treasures of the Vatican exhibit and convincing Chevron to sponsor the show – Emergence of blockbuster exhibitions and subsequent changes to museums, opening museums at night, increasing importance of museum shops - Rebuilding of de Young Museum by Dede Wilsey in 2005 – Relationship of Fine Arts Museums to Asian Art Museum and MOMA.

Tape 10

155

Bringing the King Tut exhibition to the de Young Museum in 1979 – de Young purchased a stolen piece of Egyptian art from the British Museum - Returning the piece to Egypt – Traveling to Egypt to try to get the King Tut exhibit sent to the de Young – Negotiating with Egyptian authorities, importance of returning stolen piece of art - King Tut exhibit had 1.2 million visitors in six weeks – Preparing the museum for the blockbuster show – Innovation to handle the crowds, including advance ticket sales – Legacy of King Tut exhibit – Discusses personal art collection – Traveling the world with Ellen after Joseph Magnin sale and starting to collect art – Convincing John Rockefeller III to donate his collection to the city of San Francisco.

Interview 6: July 30, 2010

Tape 11

171

Approach to raising his three boys – Sons' education and career choices - All three sons went to boarding school. Middle son, Bob, was diagnosed with a brain tumor while in business school – Moving family to Boston to be with Bob - Transferring Bob to UCSF – Bob's death in 1981 – Founding of National Brain Tumor Foundation – Merging with the Boston-based Brain Tumor Society to become to National Brain Tumor Society – Raising money for brain tumor research

Tape 12

185

Changes in treating brain tumors in the past thirty years – Role as president and director of Temple Emanu-El from 1980 to 1986 – Efforts to revitalize the temple and appeal to young Jewish community – Appointing Bob Kirschner as the head rabbi – Finding Cantor Roslyn Barak to replace Cantor Portnoy – Negotiating with city manager of Colma to allow a road to be built on temple property,

property profitably rezoned as commercial –Thoughts on Rabbi Kirchner leaving the temple amid personal scandal.

Interview 7: September 1, 2010

Tape 13

199

Support of the Troops to College program, working with City College of San Francisco—Reflections on the experiences of veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—Support of University High School in San Francisco and thoughts on educational opportunities in San Francisco—As a benefactor for UCSF—Securing the land for UCSF campus in Mission Bay—Negotiating the land deal for the Gap headquarters building in San Francisco—Redevelopment politics

Tape 14

213

Presidio Heights Association of Neighbors—WSN Enterprises—More on the Gap headquarters property and building—Reflections on changes in the built environment of San Francisco—The attempt to build an art museum in the Presidio—Reflections in retirement and a career in public service—Changes in the culture of San Francisco

Interview #1: June 09, 2010

Begin Audio File 1 06-09-2010.mp3

01-00:00:00

Meeker: Okay.

01-00:00:03

Stein: What is the date today? It's the 9<sup>th</sup>. It's right there.

01-00:00:06

Meeker: All right. This is Martin Meeker interviewing Walter Newman for the Regional Oral History Office and today is the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2010 and this is tape one. So the way that we always start these projects, of course, is to ask you to state your name, year and place of birth, and then I ask people to tell a little bit about the circumstances into which you were born. But it sounds like you and your family have done a little bit of maybe genealogical work and your family background is quite interesting as far as the establishment of the Town of Newman and so forth. So rather than just ask you a little bit about your family background, I'm going to ask you to kind of go back and kind of share with me the extent to which you possess sort of a memory of your genealogy. Like how far does it go back? You can either take your mother or your father's direction. And kind of bring us up to your parents.

01-00:01:20

Newman: My name is Walter Simon Newman, Sr., and my date of birth was October 1, 1921. I was born in San Francisco, California. My mother's name was Anita Patek Newman and my father's name was Simon Walter Newman. The Newman family dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century in California and has a very colorful history. My grandfather's name was Simon Newman and Simon came to California under the auspices of his brother-in-law, Mr. Saul Wangenheim, who had a small store in Markleeville in the Sierra Nevada Mountains during the gold and silver rush. And Simon came here as a young boy from Melrichstacht in Bavaria, in Germany. He spoke no English and he came to Markleeville and lived in the back of the store. The store primarily was involved in selling supplies to the mining people.

And when the mines started to run out, Simon and Saul Wangenheim decided that they wanted to reestablish their business in what was then the very productive agricultural area of Central California and they started a small store along the San Joaquin River in the town of Hills Ferry. We still have a picture showing the small store, S. Newman. And in those days, most of the great agricultural products of California were shipped to San Francisco by boat. Back in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Southern Pacific established a railroad from Oakland to Fresno and Simon and Mr.

Wangenheim had expanded their business to the point where they had acquired a lot of land. They had warehouses and they had built a significant business. The Southern Pacific railroad company asked Simon to move the business up to the new railhead. They would give him land and they would help him get established there. Simon and Mr. Wangenheim agreed and the whole town moved from Hills Ferry up to the railroad and the Town of Newman, California, was founded. Periodically they have a celebration where everybody rides from Hills Ferry on horseback, up to the Town of Newman.

01-00:05:03

Meeker: So this migration of the town is still remembered?

01-00:05:08

Newman: It still is.

01-00:05:09

Meeker: Any idea of the size of Hills Ferry? How many families are we talking about really?

01-00:05:15

Newman: Oh, it couldn't have been over 500 people, something like that.

01-00:05:22

Meeker: Okay. It was mostly an agricultural town? Yes?

01-00:05:23

Newman: Yes, it was. The type of agriculture that was operated at that time was primarily due to rainfall. They didn't have the irrigation systems that we have today. But one of the very colorful parts of the whole Newman enterprise, because Simon Newman was quite a visionary and he expanded the store. He built a very large department store there, which was the largest store between Stockton and Fresno. He started to acquire land. He financed the farmers. He started the Bank of Newman. The town grew up around the Simon Newman Company. It thrived. The town thrived to the point that in the middle of the twentieth century, it was a town of about 1,500 people.

One of the colorful parts of the whole story is that the great cattle kings of California were Miller & Lux. And their properties adjoined Simon Newman's properties. It was like a feud that went on between Simon Newman and Miller & Lux. Miller & Lux was a much more powerful organization and Henry Miller was a real competitor of Simon Newman. However, when Simon was on his deathbed, Henry Miller came to his home and shook hands and they buried the hatchet.

But in the course of their competition, Henry Miller started the town of Gustine, which is just across the border of Stanislaus and Merced County to

compete with the town of Newman. And today the town of Newman and Gustine are still competitive. It's all part of the color of California.

01-00:08:01

Meeker: My understanding is Miller was also very much invested in cattle raising in California.

01-00:08:07

Newman: He was. So was Simon Newman.

01-00:08:11

Meeker: So he was diversified, if you will, in the way in which he was using his land?

01-00:08:15

Newman: Simon Newman Company, at the height of its existence, had many thousands of acres of farming land and occupied almost the entire range of the Orestimba and the Garces canyons, many thousands of acres, and they were in the cattle business for many, many years.

01-00:08:47

Meeker: When did Simon Newman meet his spouse? When and where? Is that lost to history perhaps?

01-00:08:54

Newman: I don't know. I don't know when they actually met, but they lived in San Francisco and he had two brothers, Sigmund and Judah. They formed a company called Newman Brothers and they actually were grain dealers. They had the farms down in the Valley and they were actually brokering grain in San Francisco. So Simon, who really was the entrepreneur, used to drive his horse and buggy from San Francisco to Newman. I'm sure that they found out what the prices of grain were and knew it before the farmers knew it. It was all part of the way they ran their business. But they sold everything from baby apparel and supplies to coffins in the Simon Newman store and they had the dealership for almost every major resource in that area.

01-00:10:06

Meeker: Cradle to grave then? Yes. Are there any stories passed down about the social existence? What kind of crowd they moved in. Were they part of a congregation? Were they interested in any philanthropy, in promoting the arts or anything like that?

01-00:10:30

Newman: They were very definitely in the upper class of Jewish society in San Francisco and Simon Newman became the president of Congregation Emanuel. His wife died quite early in life. They had five children and the family was very, very tightly connected. The greatest celebration, of course, as I remember, were our Thanksgiving dinners. Always involved were all the

children of Simon Newman. It went down to the third generation. It was always a lot of fun. But it was a requirement at that dinner that everybody perform. You had to write a skit or you had to tell a story, regardless of what age you were. And it was great training for the young people. They had to get up in front of an audience and perform.

01-00:11:41

Meeker: So it sounds like you went to some of these Thanksgiving dinners at Simon Newman's home in San Francisco?

01-00:11:47

Newman: Simon Newman died before I was born. He died, I think it was 1916 and I'll never forget my dad, Simon Walter Newman, who was going to college in Berkeley at the time, went to worship every single morning in memory of his father for a whole year and commuted to Berkeley on the boat.

01-00:12:23

Meeker: That's dedication.

01-00:12:24

Newman: It was.

01-00:12:24

Meeker: Do you know where your grandfather lived in San Francisco? Is there a memory of the home that he lived in?

01-00:12:30

Newman: Yes. He lived on Franklin Street. I can't give you the address. They did move several times. I can tell you about my maternal grandfather.

01-00:12:43

Meeker: Please do.

01-00:12:46

Newman: My maternal grandfather's name was Frederick Patek. P-A-T-E-K. And he also came from Bavaria but his mother had come to California during the gold rush and she used to live on Presidio Avenue and Jackson Street. I used to go and visit her in her nineties. Fred Patek went into the meat business in San Francisco, formed a meat packing company called Patek Ecklon. He built it into a very significant enterprise, in which they bought cattle from the slaughterhouses down in San Jose and they prepared them for sale to the leading restaurants and hotels in San Francisco and the Bay Area. And I remember as a little boy my grandfather Patek and I were very close and every Friday night he would take me out to dinner to one of these good restaurants where he sold the meat. So it was always very pleasant.

And I can remember when we lived at One Spruce Street, my grandfather lived with us. And, of course, all our meat came from Patek Ecklon and people knew we were having company when the fish and chicken wagon came up to our house because the meat wagon came up every day. Fred Patek was a great public spirited citizen in San Francisco. He was the president of Mount Zion Hospital and a great philanthropist. He moved out of the family home to the Saint Francis Hotel where he lived until the end of his life. He had two daughters, one daughter who moved to New York. Her name was Eleanor Patek. She married Mr. David Wertheim. They were divorced and she went to New York. Married Benno Falk and he died and she married Ben Feldstein and he died and so we brought her back to San Francisco and she lived here until her death.

My mother, Anita Patek, was a brilliant woman. Tremendously dynamic. A classic woman of those times. She was public spirited. One of the things that she was very deeply involved in was an organization to train young immigrant women to become members of society and learn a job, particularly housework, as domestic employees, teaching them manners and how to deal with family arrangements. And that went on for many, many years. So she was quite active in that. Very positive. A real liberal.

01-00:16:55

Meeker: Was this in New York? I assume that she moved back to New York with her mother? Is that correct?

01-00:17:01

Newman: No, no.

01-00:17:01

Meeker: No. Am I getting this wrong?

01-00:17:02

Newman: No, this is different. That was her sister.

01-00:17:04

Meeker: Oh, that was her sister. Okay, I apologize.

01-00:17:05

Newman: Her sister, Mrs. Feldstein went back to New York.

01-00:17:08

Meeker: Okay.

01-00:17:09

Newman: But my mother stayed here until her death.

01-00:17:13

Meeker: So why don't you tell me a little bit about your parents meeting, to the extent that that story was passed down to you.

01-00:17:21

Newman: Well, I had the happiest life in San Francisco. I had two wonderful parents who loved me dearly and they wanted to do everything they could to make my life happy and did everything they could physically and financially to help me. I was a sickly young man. I had pneumonia a number of times, to the point that we moved from One Spruce Street to Palm Springs at the recommendations of the physicians, to get me out of the fog and so forth. Then we moved back to Palo Alto and I recovered then we came back to San Francisco. I went to public school.

01-00:18:23

Meeker: Do you have some general date range or age range when you moved to Palm Springs?

01-00:18:29

Newman: Yes. I think I was eight. So it would be 1929. And we lived there for a year, 1930, and then I think we lived in Palo Alto for a year, '31.

01-00:18:44

Meeker: Do you remember much about living in Palm Springs?

01-00:18:46

Newman: I do.

01-00:18:47

Meeker: I imagine it was just getting started at that point in time.

01-00:18:51

Newman: It was. It was just kind of the wide open spaces. I used to ride horseback almost every day and I learned to swim as I was getting better, getting over the chest problems.

01-00:19:10

Meeker: You remember your pneumonia improving there?

01-00:19:12

Newman: I do. Yes.

01-00:19:15

Meeker: And then you lived in Palo Alto for a year or two?

01-00:19:18

Newman: Yes. For about a year. Because that was out of the fog belt.

01-00:19:24

Meeker: Yes. So when your family moved back to San Francisco, it sounds like in the early 1930s, where did they move to?

01-00:19:33

Newman: They moved to One Spruce Street.

01-00:19:36

Meeker: Oh, back to the family home.

01-00:19:38

Newman: Yes. And my dad was in business in San Francisco. He had purchased a company by the name of Charles Brown and Sons and it was one of the oldest homeware and hardware stores in San Francisco. It had been founded in the 1860s. It was on the corner of Market and Stockton Street, where the Old Navy is now and it was a very successful business. It was very high class, I would say. If you were going to buy silverware or dinnerware or television—well, there was no television, but other appliances, that's where you would go. It was probably the leading store of its type in San Francisco. He established a branch on Post Street and then in the forties I think unionism was becoming more prevalent. His lease expired and he decided to close the business. He was having some labor issues then. I think he foresaw that there were going to be labor issues. It was just the time, he thought, to get out of the business. His brother Edwin had become his partner, so it was still two Newman's in that company.

However, my father was a great outdoorsman and I always loved the out of door, with him, and also with other activities that I got in to, we were out of doors a great deal. He taught me to shoot, he taught me to fish. We used to hike together. My mother was not as active as my dad but we had a wonderful, wonderful time together.

When I was in my early youth, twelve years old, I went into the Boy Scouts, which was one of the most meaningful things I think I ever did, because it taught you responsibility, courtesy, decency, respect and all of the things that I think help to make a good person. And I lived with the Boy Scout rules. I became a senior patrol leader. I went on camping trips with the guys and really took scouting very seriously. One of the happiest events in my life at that age, I think I was thirteen or fourteen, Lord Baden-Powell, who was the founder of Scouting, came to San Francisco and they had what they called a Court of Honor at which you get your Eagle Scout Badge. And I worked like a dog to get two or three merit badges just in order to get in in time. The day that I received my Eagle badge from Lord Baden-Powell was unforgettable.

01-00:23:37

Meeker: So you actually met Lord Baden-Powell?

01-00:23:42

Newman: He pinned it on me.

01-00:23:42

Meeker: That's quite remarkable.

01-00:23:43

Newman: It really was.

01-00:23:44

Meeker: Not a whole lot of people that can claim that.

01-00:23:45

Newman: He died shortly after that.

01-00:23:48

Meeker: Sure, sure.

01-00:23:49

Newman: My folks taught me or gave me opportunities. They gave me piano lessons. I loved to play jazz piano. They gave me coaching in French so that I could speak French. They just tried to help make me a fully rounded person.

01-00:24:15

Meeker: You had said that your dad was a great outdoorsman and he took you out a lot. What were some of the favorite places that you would go to?

01-00:24:21

Newman: Well, of course, one of the greatest hunting places for ducks—ducks primarily were our game—is Newman. It's in the central flyway of California and you can go down there and find all the ducks you needed. And we'd go down for a weekend, come back with a box full of ducks and then we would have a duck dinner at some restaurant downtown and invite friends. It was a lot of fun. And we'd go fishing. We'd go fishing in the lakes and in the rivers around California. We were just buddies.

01-00:25:05

Meeker: So I had asked when your parents met. Did they meet in San Francisco?

01-00:25:09

Newman: They did. They were both highly placed families. Mr. Patek's family was well respected and so were the Newman's. When Anita and Walter met and decided to get married, that was a major social event. It took place in the Saint Francis Hotel and we still have the menu. It was a banquet. And pictures of that wedding. It took place in 1915 or '16. Then my dad went into the military. I think my dad might have wanted to be a doctor but he also loved agriculture. He studied science at Berkeley and then he went into the Army

and went to Del Rio, Texas where he was a microbiologist doing tests on diseases and so forth. My mother went down to Del Rio with him and then the war was over and they came back.

01-00:26:35

Meeker: He sounds like a real polymath. Here he is helping run a commercial business in San Francisco and an agricultural business.

01-00:26:42

Newman: That was later.

01-00:26:43

Meeker: That was later. Okay. But also interested in studying science and obviously serving in the military. So many different pursuits.

01-00:26:53

Newman: Well, the Simon Newman Company in Newman was a very major part of the financial well-being of this family. I think my dad had always hoped that he would go down there and run it and he and my mom did go down there for a year, but I think the family, for whatever reason, didn't like it there, I don't know, but they moved back to San Francisco. But the central part of their whole life, all of the brothers and sisters, was San Francisco, with the exception of Louis Newman. And Louis Newman was my uncle and he ran the Simon Newman Company in Newman where I went to work.

01-00:27:46

Meeker: Okay. So this wedding that your parents have at the Saint Francis Hotel in 1916, then you come along a few years later in 1921. You had also mentioned, just moving back a little bit, the Thanksgiving meals. You said there were a number of his children who went there. Maybe you can sort of run through your uncle's on your paternal and your maternal side. Or your aunts and uncles.

01-00:28:20

Newman: I forgot to mention, I did have a wonderful sister, Francis Lilienthal, who died about two years ago. She was six years my senior. That was our whole intimate family. But the Newman family consisted of five brothers and sisters. The oldest one was Rose Blum. She was married to an attorney by the name of Max Blum. The next eldest was Minnie Kahn, C-A-H-N, who was married to Julius Kahn. And Julius Kahn was in the investment business, but his great fame came from being the head of the Boy Scouts of America in the Bay Area. The third son was Edwin Newman and that's quite a story in itself. He was married to Elizabeth Weil and then—Louis, L-O-U-I-S, Newman came after Minnie. I think he was the third eldest. And then Edwin and then my father, Simon Walter Newman was the youngest.

Edwin made a fortune in a business called Crown Army. Crown Army shirts. They made the khaki shirts that the soldiers wore in World War I. It was just a thriving business. His wife's name was Elizabeth Weil. She came from Mexico, where her family owned the largest steel mills in Mexico called Consolidata. Then in the Revolution the Mexicans took it all away and they came to San Francisco. So they lived in this beautiful home on Maple and Jackson, one block away from me, and they had three children. Helen Louise, Alan and Peter. And Peter was three months younger than I am and we were like brothers. I never had a brother. So we used to have the Jackson Street Gang. There were a whole lot of guys our age and we used to play on Jackson St. and in the Presidio.

01-00:31:31

Meeker:

The story about San Francisco during this era, the teens, twenties, thirties, is fascinating and it's especially fascinating the way in which you're describing all of these families. And some of them have very familiar last names. And San Francisco, one of the jokes about it is it's a big city but it's also a very small town. The idea of there's six degrees of separation is really like, well, maybe there's two, maybe one degree of separation in San Francisco. And then especially if you shrink it down a little bit to families of some means and then Jewish families that are maybe socializing in different circles than Irish Catholic families whose life is around their parish, it seems to me that there's probably a very small circle of people who you would have known and who your families would have known. I kind of ask this question because I think about the story of you meeting your wife to be Ellen of the Magnin family. And I imagine that your families must have sort of known or interacted in some fashion for maybe even years, if not generations, prior to you meeting.

01-00:32:54

Newman:

Well, I think that's very astute. Our social life when we were teens was primarily around a group of maybe fifty or seventy-five friends. Probably most of them were Jewish, although we had a lot of others. But we used to go to people's homes and have parties together, the young people, and we'd dance and listen to music and just have a nice dinner and things. So that the fellows got to know the girls. You know the Haas-Lilienthal house, which is now a legacy in San Francisco, and they used to have wonderful parties in their ballroom. We all looked forward to going there because they had the best food. We'd go on vacation with some of these families. Everybody kind of knew everybody else. To this day, our families still have wonderful relationships with them.

01-00:34:22

Meeker:

It must be pretty special and unique. As you've done traveling, and especially with Joseph Magnin and gone to different cities like Los Angeles and New York, I'm sure you've interacted with other families that were similar to yours in those places. Do you find that San Francisco is unique in the kinds of

rapport that the family has and the relationships that they have here or is it something that you see repeated in other cities across the country?

01-00:34:59

Newman: I wanted to kind of stress one focal point of what we were just talking about. There's a club in San Francisco called the Concordia Argonaut Club and it was basically a Jewish club. It was founded by our forefathers because the other clubs were closed to them and they wanted to have a social place to gather. They had a wonderful swimming pool and great gymnasium and then club rooms and we started there as little boys. I think I started there when I was eight or nine years old. And we learned to box and to wrestle and to swim and there were usually—there must have been thirty or forty other boys that were there and those became our friends. They're our friends today through life. It was just that kinship that came from these wonderful experiences being down there. And the club is still there and we still go there.

01-00:36:16

Meeker: On Van Ness Avenue, right?

01-00:36:17

Newman: That's right. We don't really have that much contact with other cities other than Ellen's family, who are in New York City and who we visit periodically. Ellen's mom came from New York City. But in the course of our lives we've made friends all over the world, and so when we go someplace we usually visit our friends. But our intimate friends are the ones here in San Francisco that usually date back to our earliest days.

For example, Richard Goldman who lives right across the street from us, and Edgar Stone who lives up on the next block and Roger Boas, who lives three blocks away. These were all fellows that were in the Concordia Club swimming program together.

01-00:37:22

Meeker: It's a fascinating story. It's quite amazing for relationships to not only be one lifetime but maybe even more than one generation. That's quite remarkable, especially in this day and age and I think it's worth talking about a little bit.

01-00:37:38

Newman: I can give you a case in point. My mother and dad and all of their generation loved to play bridge and they had a bridge club of about, oh, I would say thirty or forty people. Two or three times a month they would have a bridge game at someone else's house and they would have dinner together. That group stayed together for, I don't know, thirty years playing bridge together. Of course, their kids were all part of the same scene.

01-00:38:20

Meeker: And remain in San Francisco, many of them.

01-00:38:22

Newman: Yes.

01-00:38:23

Meeker: That's remarkable.

01-00:38:24

Newman: Well, see, this is such a wonderful city that people don't like to leave.

01-00:38:30

Meeker: So you were raised in this Spruce Street home, yes?

01-00:38:33

Newman: Correct.

01-00:38:34

Meeker: Where were you educated?

01-00:38:36

Newman: I went to public school at Madison School on Clay Street from kindergarten through the sixth grade and I got along very well. I was president of the student body at Madison School and I thought I got an excellent education there. At that point I went to junior high school at Roosevelt Junior High which had just been built. That was on Arguello and Geary.

01-00:39:17

Meeker: And that was a public school, yes?

01-00:39:19

Newman: Yes. And I went there. The most desirable school in the city was Lowell High School. And Lowell High School started at the ninth grade and went through the twelfth grade. So I transferred from Roosevelt to Lowell in the ninth grade and I went to Lowell for two years and then Lowell was condemned for seismic retrofitting. And so they closed the school. And the students were then transferred to Galileo High. The way they handled it was really unique. The students at Galileo High, instead of going all day at school, were cut back to half-day and the other half-day the students from Lowell High School went there for the remainder of the day. So for two years I went to Galileo High School, where I graduated. In other words, I transferred because I wanted to go to the morning classes. And went to Galileo High School, where I graduated.

01-00:40:51

Meeker: Well, so then you actually experienced two different high school cultures, right? You didn't transfer over with your classmates from Lowell to Galileo?

01-00:41:01

Newman: Right.

01-00:41:01

Meeker: How were they different? How was the student body different in those two places?

01-00:41:04

Newman: I think Lowell was probably more academic, a little more college directed. Galileo was primarily an Italian neighborhood down in the northern part of the city and there was a little more concentration on athletics and so forth. But I had a lot of friends that did the same thing I did, so we all had a good time at Galileo.

01-00:41:36

Meeker: Did you get involved in student government in high school, as well?

01-00:41:39

Newman: No, I didn't.

01-00:41:40

Meeker: No. Okay. How did you spend your time in high school? Were you working on the side? Were you focusing on academics?

01-00:41:48

Newman: Mostly focusing on academics and playing around, I think.

01-00:41:53

Meeker: Yes. How would you characterize your parents? Some parents are very driven vis-à-vis their children's school work. Some parents want their kids to be a football star. Did your parents play an active role in your development?

01-00:42:14

Newman: They did but they certainly were not overbearing in any sense of the word. Everything was a very loving relationship. I think they wanted to give me every opportunity to develop whatever skills I had but they didn't force me to study hard. I always did study hard. I was very proud of my academic record and I continued with my French studies, I continued with my piano. And then because we were running back and forth to Galileo, we didn't have an awful lot of free time. So it was mostly study, I think.

01-00:43:10

Meeker: So you were experienced with the city. Were you taking a bus?

01-00:43:13

Newman: Yes. It was all by bus.

01-00:43:14

Meeker: It was all by bus. Okay. Also this thing about work. One of the interesting things that Julie and I were talking about from Cyril Magnin's book was the value that he placed on work and actually the amount of work that he gave his two oldest kids, especially, as they were growing up. It sounds like they were working six days a week, twelve hours a day, just like he was. How did that compare to your experience in relation to that?

01-00:43:48

Newman: Well, I worked in the summer. I would go down to Newman because I loved the out of doors and I loved animals. I felt very comfortable down there. I lived in a boarding house and I would go out and work on the ranches. I was just a young guy but I was working on the harvester. I was shocking hay, I was milking cows, I was riding herd on cattle. That was very rewarding for me and then my folks would often take us on a vacation in the summertime. So our summers, we always went to camp when we were younger and then sometimes we'd spend a couple of weeks with our families. They'd rent a house at Tahoe or something.

But I usually spent a month or so down in Newman. I learned the store business. I worked in the store some in Newman. It was a wonderful experience for me. So I did that for three or four years.

01-00:45:03

Meeker: Of course, the major historical event of this period of time when you were in high school was the Great Depression, what was going on, and the way that there's sort of a cultural memory of it is that every single American was deeply impacted by it and that there was obviously rampant unemployment and poverty and obviously all the negative effects that came with the Depression. But the truth is that there were still many millions of Americans employed and bringing home a paycheck and raising a family and living their life as if it was not during the Great Depression. I'm kind of wondering, as you were growing up in high school, how did you personally interact with or observe the economic crisis of the day?

01-00:46:00

Newman: The only way it affected me personally was that I heard my parents talking about the Depression. We always had food on the table.

01-00:46:11

Meeker: Do you remember if that's what they called it? Did they call it the Depression?

01-00:46:13

Newman: Yes, they did. And I remember that the Simon Newman Company in Newman, CA was in big trouble and I remember my dad talking about having to come up and put personal resources in there to keep it from going under.

But I think his business suffered during that time but he never brought it home, so we didn't suffer. They may have but they never let it be known to us. And one of the things, to give you an idea of the kind of fun that we had, and it just comes back to mind. I think I was about ten years old and my dad decided with a friend, Mr. Richard Goldman, Sr., that we were going to go on a pack trip, a camping trip up in the upper Yosemite Valley to the Ten Lakes. We were going to camp up there for two weeks. My mother was invited along. Well, my mother was a grand dame. She was a great lady. She said, "Well, I'll go on one condition. That I can have a hot bath every night." Well, my dad decided he was going to go out and bought a rubber life raft and every night about seven o'clock, all the water was boiling on the camp fire and we put it in the rubber boat and my mother had a hot bath every night. But we learned to fish. I'll never forget the pack train that carried us up there and then left us camping there. It was unforgettable.

01-00:48:09

Meeker: It's a beautiful country up there.

01-00:48:11

Newman: And that's before it was very widely developed.

01-00:48:14

Meeker: Sure, sure. Fascinating.

01-00:48:16

Newman: Yes. I was just trying to think about the Depression, which was in '32. I was about eleven or twelve. I was in Scouts and everything seemed to go along just fine.

01-00:48:41

Meeker: Well, it sounds like, in essence, a gift that your parents were able to give you to a certain extent. Shelter you from the experience of it. Do you have any questions or thoughts that you wanted to follow-up on?

01-00:48:54

Stein: Yes. I'm curious. You talked about living in San Francisco in a really cosmopolitan and exciting group of people socially and academically and then spending your summers in Newman, which sounds like it was a much more agricultural rural atmosphere. And I'm curious if you remember being struck by the difference between these two areas or if there were memories as a child or a teenager of some of the differences that you experienced in these two seemingly very different communities.

01-00:49:31

Newman: That's a good question. I think my enjoyment involved my hands. I liked to work in the gardens. I liked to plant and get my hands dirty and I felt I was really accomplishing things working in Newman, working around animals,

seeing things being produced. It was a valuable experience for me and something that you couldn't get many places. Living in San Francisco, you didn't have much opportunity to do that other than playing football and playing games down at Julius Kahn playground and working in the garden at home. So I thought it expanded my horizons. By working with down and dirty people on the farm, these were farm workers, and they respected the fact that I was down there working hand and glove with them. So even though it was a whole different type of an environment, it was very enjoyable for me. Both of them. Because we had a lot of fun here in San Francisco but I had good times down there, too.

01-00:51:08

Stein: Was it ever difficult having the name Newman to work with people? It sounds like you got a lot of respect because you were a hard worker and doing exactly what everyone else was doing. Did you ever face any challenges?

01-00:51:24

Newman: Not at all. They always looked on me as being a friend and I think they saw possibly in the future continuing the business, having me grow up in it. And it was my intention in college to go down there and run that business. But I'll tell you about that later.

01-00:51:45

Stein: One more question. I'm curious. Do you have any memory of the political atmosphere? During the Depression a lot of people talk about hearing their parents talk about FDR, maybe writing letters to them. Did you ever get a sense of your parents or yourself being involved in the political atmosphere of the time?

01-00:52:07

Newman: I do. My mother, particularly, because she was a firebrand. She was unconventional. And I remember her. She said, "I don't have anything to do with either of those candidates." And Norman Thomas, who was a socialist, was her candidate.

01-00:52:28

Meeker: And he ran every time.

01-00:52:30

Newman: He did. [laughter] My dad was a Republican but moderate. My family were all moderates. I remember very well the tragedy—well, it wasn't a tragedy but it was a tremendously dangerous experience. I don't remember exactly what the year was but we had a general strike in San Francisco.

01-00:52:58

Meeker: It was 1934.

01-00:53:00

Newman: So I was thirteen and my father's merchandise was tied up in the docks because the longshoremen wouldn't unload the boats. And I remember him taking a gun and going down in his car to get his merchandise and take it out himself. So there were some pretty hairy times, I think.

01-00:53:33

Meeker: So historians like to think in kind of grand historical sweeps and the big concept of change over time. One thing that historians have been looking at in recent years is changing in dating and courtship patterns and those sorts of issues. The kind of typical image of what was going on in the Victorian era, late nineteenth century, chaperones, meetings of young men and women on the front porch and making sure that there was a distance between them and very polite and protecting the young women's virtue and so forth and then fast forward fifty years later and historians observe this massive sea change. You have kids driving around in their own cars going to drive in movie theaters by themselves and who knows what happens in the back seat. You came of age in high school and kind of in between that period of time. I'm wondering, according to your memory, what were the rules placed on your interactions with young women? How did you date?

01-00:54:58

Newman: I can put it this way. There were the nice girls and then there were the other kind.

01-00:55:07

Meeker: The fast girls? Is that what they called them?

01-00:55:08

Newman: Yes. Right. And most of the girls that we knew were the nice girls. We knew their parents. They came from nice backgrounds. They were nice people. And you didn't fool around. And there were the other girls that wanted to go out and have a little different time with and that's what you did. And, of course, in the early days there were houses of prostitution in San Francisco, that for two dollars you could go in anywhere you wanted. A lot of the guys did some of that, too. So it was just pretty much expected that you maintained a nice friendship without any sexual overtones. I mean, you had a little necking, that kind of thing, but I don't think anybody ever got in trouble.

01-00:56:17

Meeker: During that period of time.

01-00:56:18

Newman: Yes.

01-00:56:19

Meeker: It's interesting. You can see the young couples like literally kind of moving together as the years go on. Necking wouldn't have been acceptable probably in the 1890s and maybe in the 1950s or 1960s certainly it would have seemed a little tame to even be talking about that. And so it's kind of interesting the way that you kind of talk about it. There's this middle period of time that the young couples were moving with each other but not quite fully engaged with one another, to speak metaphorically.

01-00:56:54

Newman: I have to be candid with you. I don't think that, other than if you knew some girls who would, as we call it, put out, that you ever forced yourself on anybody. It was a much more platonic type of friendship. We knew each other, we went to school with each other. I don't think that sex entered into it at that point.

01-00:57:25

Meeker: Was it frowned upon to date across religious groups?

01-00:57:32

Newman: Not at all.

01-00:57:34

Meeker: Not at all. Okay. It seems like there was some of that. My mother was Protestant and my father was Catholic and I've heard stories about my grandfather, a little suspicious of this non-Catholic girl dating my father. I imagine that there would have been similar issues brought up.

01-00:57:58

Newman: Not to my knowledge. The city of San Francisco had always been a very open society as far as we knew. And the people that were in our particular social group were all moderate, Reformed Judaism, quite liberal, quite middle of the road. I don't think I ever knew any Orthodox Jews. Everybody participated in everything. Religious lines didn't seem to hamper anything in San Francisco as far as we were concerned. You could do almost anything with the exception of maybe belonging to the Pacific Union Club. If you were Jewish and had talent you could belong to Bohemia. We knew a few people who did that.

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 06-09-2010.mp3

02-00:00:00

Meeker: So assuming that you graduated high school about age eighteen, that would have been about 1939. Is that correct?

02-00:00:19

Newman: Thirty-eight.

02-00:00:20

Meeker: Thirty-eight. Okay. Well, let's talk about your decision to go to UC Berkeley. Of course, then they had an Ag department. Tell me a little bit about your decision making process of where you wanted to go to college and what you were looking to accomplish in college.

02-00:00:44

Newman: Well, my father had been a graduate of UC Berkeley. I was primarily interested in science at the time and I didn't know exactly what career I was going to follow but I thought I wanted to get a good college education. I didn't apply to Stanford. I think it would have been financially burdensome on my family to do so. I just decided I wanted to go to Cal. A number of my friends were going. That's where we started out.

02-00:01:27

Meeker: Did any of your friends look to colleges back east? Was there any interest in that?

02-00:01:32

Newman: Yes. Some of them did. But I had no particular desire to leave. I knew I'd get a good education at Berkeley. It was easy.

02-00:01:46

Meeker: Well, tell me, when you enrolled in Berkeley, I assume that was probably the fall of 1938.

Well, you graduated from Galileo in '38 but then you would have enrolled in the fall.

02-00:01:59

Newman: Yes, that's right. Sorry.

02-00:02:00

Meeker: That's all right. Did you live on or near campus?

02-00:02:06

Newman: I lived off campus. A group of friends and I lived in a boarding house on College Avenue for one year and that was very pleasant. We had a good time. And then a friend of mine and I decided we'd rent an apartment on the north side of the campus and we did that for a year. At that point I decided that I really wanted to focus on scientific agriculture and the best place to do that was UC Davis. So I transferred to UC Davis in 1940. And that was a very wonderful experience for me. I really grew into a much more public person at that time. It was a smaller school. I lived in the dormitory, West Hall. But I

got involved in all kinds of different activities. I was a golfer and I went out for the golf team and I got on it. And we went on to win the Far Western Conference Championship. That was quite an experience in itself. And I went on to the newspaper and I wrote a daily column. I ran for student body office. I probably could have run for president but I ran for vice-president and I was elected. I was nominated to the honors society, which was quite an honor, and I finished top in the class. I went into ROTC. I had been in ROTC at Berkeley and became a cadet and commanding officer of the military unit at UC Davis.

02-00:04:35

Meeker: I wonder about the columns that you wrote. Were they about sort of campus issues or were you kind of a columnist?

02-00:04:42

Newman: All kinds of things. I was the Herb Caen of Davis. The name of the column was "As I See It."

02-00:04:52

Meeker: Okay. That sounds rather self-explanatory then.

02-00:04:55

Newman: Yes.

02-00:04:56

Meeker: How did you see things then?

02-00:04:59

Newman: Whatever the political situation was in the campus or whatever things came up I would write about. Fellows would give me stories and things. And Davis was an entirely different environment than UC Berkeley. They had what they called the hello spirit and it was a requirement if you were a freshman, that you had to say hello to anybody who walked by you. If you didn't, the upperclassmen could paddle you. I think it still goes on. But everybody was very friendly up there. I enjoyed it. I was taking agricultural subjects that interested me. My wife always quotes the fact that I spent a day and the night with a cow, because you had to measure all the input, measure everything that came out, measure all the milk and write a report on that. So that was fun.  
[laughter]

02-00:06:21

Meeker: [laughter] In addition to this, do you remember some of the more memorable classes that you took? Maybe some of the more memorable professors?

02-00:06:28

Newman: Well, I took agricultural economics, animal husbandry, dairy industry, agronomy, I think maybe an advanced English course, too.

02-00:07:02

Meeker: You know that, of course, Davis is renowned now for its viticultural program. Did they have any of that going on? Did you have any interest in that?

02-00:07:09

Newman: They did. They did.

02-00:07:11

Meeker: In growing grapes?

02-00:07:12

Newman: I didn't. No.

02-00:07:15

Meeker: Definitely some of your classmates, I imagine, were taking some of these classes.

02-00:07:19

Newman: They did. I'll never forget. One of my best friends was in horticulture. I took a course in horticulture, too. They had a campus orchard and he got the privilege, we could go out and pick the fruit in the campus orchard and eat it. Boy, that was fun because they had some great things. But I was really into everything at Davis. I ate it up.

02-00:07:50

Meeker: Who were the students there? Were they mostly children of farmers who were attending Davis?

02-00:07:57

Newman: Yes. Most of them were ranch people or farm people who were going back and hopefully getting more scientific approaches to agriculture. And my family really wanted me to go to Newman. I had a lot of visions of what we could do down there, and I did a lot of things down there. I'll tell you about that.

02-00:08:28

Meeker: Well, when you were attending college, what were some of the things that you were learning and how did you think you were going to be able to apply those after you had gone down to Newman?

02-00:08:37

Newman: Well, this course in animal husbandry was very important as far as the production of beef, and the direction that one could take on producing healthier beef and feed and so forth. And you learned a lot of chemistry. I had taken physics at Berkeley but the course in dairy industry taught you how to increase the production of your animals and to feed them healthy foods and

how to run a very scientific operation profitably. So these were all things that I applied to what could be done in Newman.

02-00:09:32

Meeker:

Obviously agriculture has been one of the main focal points of science throughout human history and that's where a lot of innovation has happened in relation to us wanting to feed ourselves. But I know, particularly in the twentieth century, in the mid-part of the twentieth century, this is when a lot of innovation comes in. If pesticides and agriculture trying to increase production and much later on genetically modified approaches to both animals and agriculture. Yet there's also a countervailing tendency in agriculture to want to increase production but at the same time limit the impact of science through chemistry and so forth on the agricultural process. Was there ever any kind of discussion about this, like weariness about the impact of science on animal husbandry or horticulture or something like this?

02-00:10:55

Newman:

I think the only impact of science was to improve the quality of the products and how to grow crops that were important and to protect the environment. That was still very important. But I think everyone recognized that agriculture was the largest industry in California and that it could be improved by science. There was a lot of research going on up there. We got involved in a lot of that. So they were certainly aware of the dangers of pesticides and so forth. They tried to make every advance beneficial to mankind.

02-00:12:07

Meeker:

So it doesn't sound like there was an active dialogue or debate going on about should we be taking this approach. Should we be going full bore ahead with the scientific approach or not. It sounds like there was a real belief that science was going to make our agricultural and ranching systems better and so that's what we were going to do.

02-00:12:37

Newman:

Definitely.

02-00:12:38

Meeker:

You said there was some research going on. Do you remember some of the research projects that you had participated on?

02-00:12:44

Newman:

Oh, it was mostly breeding.

02-00:12:47

Meeker:

Breeding, okay. And they were trying to get kind of a more robust breed of cow?

02-00:12:52

Newman: Yes. And in the dairy end they were doing a lot of research. I'll never forget, they said milk was the perfect food and they were trying to prove why that was so. But they also recognized the importance of limiting fat. And we learned how to make cheese and how to make skim milk and all of those things. It was pretty much hands on.

02-00:13:26

Meeker: Wow. It sounds like really from the beginning of the process to the very end of the process. Of course, another major thing that happens when you're in college is the beginning of World War II, both in Europe in 1939 and then with the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. How did you experience that as a student? I don't know what it must have been like but I can imagine that there would have been kind of a dissonance. There you are, a young person in college, your whole life is ahead of you. It sounds like when you get to Davis you find yourself, to a certain extent. You start to participate in public life more, you start to reach out. But then in the broader world there's this horror of the World War going on and aggression in Europe and all that sort of stuff. How did you experience that?

02-00:14:33

Newman: Well, as I mentioned, I had been in the ROTC program and I was a commanding officer and I had a responsibility to the troops to train them properly up there. So I think I fully expected to go into the military as soon as I graduated from school. And I did the next day.

02-00:15:02

Meeker: So maybe you can tell me where were you in December of 1941? Do you remember hearing the announcement?

02-00:15:12

Newman: I'll never forget. One of my best friends was a Japanese American student and he lived in San Francisco. So we'd drive up to Davis together. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, we were driving. That was a Sunday. We were driving back to Davis and he said, "Walter, I won't be seeing very much of you anymore." He knew that they might have to be interned or that our paths would not cross again, and they didn't. And I'll never forget that. But there were Japanese American students up there. It was a tragedy.

02-00:16:04

Meeker: Did you experience any fear about your homeland being invaded? Hawaii's just a few hours away by airplane.

02-00:16:15

Newman: We knew we were at war and I knew I was going to take a part in it. I didn't know exactly what part it would be. But I was prepared to do whatever I was called on to do. I knew I would be a second lieutenant and second lieutenant's

are the first ones to get killed because they're the leaders of the platoons and platoons are the ones that go into battle first.

02-00:16:50

Meeker: There's the two theaters of the war, right? Like the Pacific theater, of course, which was much closer to a kid living in California. I imagine a lot of your fellow college students back east didn't have a Japanese American friend. So it's interesting that you bring that up first as how you responded to the news of the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor. Of course, there's the other theater, the European theater, which is about the axis powers of Germany and Italy and aggression and Hitler. I'm wondering what you knew about Hitler. One, his military program, but then also his social approach, particularly around his anti-Semitism and so forth.

02-00:17:49

Newman: We were aware of it back in 1938 when Hitler started to persecute the Jews openly. My family had relatives in Germany and they brought them to California. Some of them lived in Newman and actually worked for the Simon Newman Company. My dad had some of them working in Charles Brown and they were all over. So we were quite conscious that this was happening. But, of course, Britain was going through the battle of Britain and I think we all felt that we were going to end up fighting in Europe because the Pacific war hadn't really mounted up at that point.

02-00:18:48

Meeker: So you saw the writing on the wall? That even though the United States hadn't declared war in 1939 or 1940, you were in ROTC and you figured that you were probably going to see some action in Europe.

02-00:19:02

Newman: Oh, definitely. Yes. Because everybody was being called up. There was a draft at that time.

02-00:19:10

Meeker: Did you have any knowledge of what the ramifications of Hitler's anti-Semitic programs were? How far it went and to the lengths that he was going? Obviously your family was in a sense rescuing other family members in Europe but did they have a sense of really what they were rescuing them from?

02-00:19:31

Newman: I think they got them out before they were harmed. I don't think anyone realized the death camps that Hitler had until they were exposed.

02-00:19:44

Meeker: After the war.

02-00:19:45

Newman: Yes.

02-00:19:47

Meeker: What did you personally think of the political leadership of the country at the time? Roosevelt was a somewhat polarizing figure in the Great Depression but once war is declared it seems like Americans, with some exceptions, certainly, rally about his leadership. And you said that your mother was maybe a socialist and your father was sort of a more moderate Republican. Did you have a particular opinion about the political leadership of the country as it was entering into war?

02-00:20:24

Newman: I saw Franklin Roosevelt as being one of the greatest leaders this country's ever had. He pulled this country out of the Depression and he was a good leader and a good war leader. At that time, and even into my period in combat, we always had the greatest admiration for what he was doing. We trusted him.

02-00:20:53

Meeker: So you graduate then in 19—

02-00:20:56

Newman: Forty-two.

02-00:20:57

Meeker: —42 and you say you report to? Where do you report the next day?

02-00:21:02

Newman: We went to Camp Roberts. Went to the reception center.

02-00:21:08

Meeker: And Camp Roberts is—

02-00:21:09

Newman: In Paso Robles.

02-00:21:10

Meeker: —central coast. Sure. Yes. Did you jump on a bus at the Oakland Army Base or something like that?

02-00:21:18

Newman: I had a car.

02-00:21:19

Meeker: Yes, okay. So you drove down there yourself and you reported for duty at Camp Roberts. Then what happens? I'm going to assume they put you through some sort of initial training, right?

02-00:21:28

Newman: Well, they have a basic training course there. It was rather short. I think it was six weeks or something like that. And then I got orders to proceed to Fort Lewis Washington to join the 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry. And they gave you what they call a delay in route. I think I got five days. Like a holiday vacation. And I drove up to Seattle and I went to the commandant's office to report for duty. It was the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Sorry. They said, "Well, you're late. They left last week for Attu." I said, "Well, here are my orders. I came as quickly as I could."

02-00:22:26

Meeker: Where did they go?

02-00:22:27

Newman: Attu, Alaska. I said, "Well, what am I supposed to do?" They said, "Stay here and we'll get you new orders." The new orders came and I was to report to the 35<sup>th</sup> Division in Long Beach. And I did and I was assigned to Company B of the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry as a second lieutenant there. We were stationed in the boat terminal where the boats go to Catalina Island. And our mission was to protect the coast from Santa Monica down past Redondo Beach. And we had patrols on the beaches. I don't think we could have stopped anything. We had a few machine guns and a few rifles and that was about it.

02-00:23:41

Meeker: Well, I assume you never encountered any enemy craft, then? Because I know there were some Japanese submarine patrols off of the West Coast.

02-00:23:50

Newman: There were but we never saw any of them. But we did have posts out every day and every night. That was our duty. And we did that for I don't remember how many months. Then as the war started to escalate, they pulled us out of there and we went out on maneuvers. We were on maneuvers. I know we went east. I think I was sent to Fort Benning after that. Yes, I went to Fort Benning, Georgia for the infantry officer's training course. It was a six weeks combat course. I came back to Long Beach and then we were sent east to go on maneuvers. I'm trying to get all of the times exactly where—well, we were stationed in different places in the east.

But I'll never forget. We were on winter maneuvers in Tennessee and I had been promoted to Executive Officer of Company B and I got a call from the Colonel to come to his office and he said, "Lieutenant, I'm going to put you in command of Company C. It's the worst company in the battalion and I give you just six months to make it the best." I said, "Sir, I'll do the best I can." Well, we were going on maneuvers. This is kind of a tale. In combat conditions the regiment was moving ahead on a mission and my company, this new Company C, was given the flank guard duty to go out about a mile from the main body and protect the flank. Well, that was fine. I took my men, about 200 men, and we went out and were patrolling along the flank. Well, we

came to a river and I sent the scouts up and down each way to find a bridge and they came back and they said, "No bridge, Sir." I said, "Well, how are we going to get across." So I said, "I'm going in first." It was up to one's shoulder. So I issued the order, "Put your guns above your head, put your hands on the shoulder of the soldier in front of you, and follow me." And we went across this river and we got over on the other side and we captured an enemy group, took them along with us, shivering cold. Couldn't light a fire because you were in the combat condition. And we kept moving and moving. Finally we captured some more enemy. We finally got to the place, Rome, Tennessee. Anyway, to make a long story short, we got a citation for action beyond the call of duty for going through this river and capturing all these people. So that was the first good thing that ever happened to Company C and it was upward from there.

02-00:27:55

Meeker: So this was a training exercise, right?

02-00:27:58

Newman: It was. Exactly.

02-00:28:00

Meeker: They probably didn't expect any of the kids to go out there and get their fatigues all wet.

02-00:28:05

Newman: No. It was shivering cold and they had to go through these rivers. But we did it. It sort of fortified the group. And then another experience that I had. We were sent up to West Virginia and I have acrophobia. If I get up on a high place and looking down, I really don't enjoy it. But they brought the officers up to these mountains and they said, "We're going to teach you mountain climbing and rappelling." I said, "Yes." Anyway, you had to do it. You had to go up, I'd say about a hundred feet, on a cliff. They'd tie a rope on a tree and you'd step over the rope and you'd put it over your shoulder and off you go. Off the cliff. You have to let it out as you go down and backwards. You're looking down. It's called rappelling. I had to do it. I thought, "What a hell of a way to die, going down a hill on a rope," but we did it and we had to train the men in doing that. I thought we were going to go in to Europe through the Alps or something because we had to learn it but we never did. That was all part of the training.

02-00:29:39

Meeker: Much to your relief, right?

02-00:29:39

Newman: Yes.

02-00:29:39

Meeker: So this company that you were heading up, did it stay together throughout your—

02-00:29:44

Newman: It stayed together. I trained them and took them into combat.

02-00:29:48

Meeker: And how many are in a company?

02-00:29:50

Newman: There are close to 200 but then we had what they called other groups attached to us, like heavy weapons. So sometimes it was as high as 250. I was twenty-one years old.

02-00:30:09

Meeker: So a really young guy and heading up a group of a bunch of other probably really young guys, right?

02-00:30:18

Newman: The unit was a National Guard unit from the Middle West. Primarily from Kansas. And these were really good soldiers. Kind of the sad thing about it is that each company came from a town and the men in that company were the youth of that town. They got decimated. They were the future of these communities. And my town, Company B was in Emporia, Kansas and Company C came from Council Grove, Kansas. And we stayed together all the way through. They went from Normandy to the Rhine to the Battle of the Bulge.

02-00:31:18

Meeker: That's a pretty major swathe of the war and not an easy one, either.

02-00:31:24

Newman: I think almost a hundred percent turnover.

02-00:31:30

Meeker: Yes. Well, let's talk a little bit—if you think it's the right time to talk about your participation in the Normandy invasion.

02-00:31:45

Newman: Sure. Well, we were sent to New York to the Port Embarkation. It might have been December of '43. We went in convoy. And landed in England and we were sent to Cornwall. Beautiful part of England. The very western tip of England called Land's End. And we were stationed in a little town called Newquay. And we spent several months on maneuvers there. We didn't know exactly what our mission was going to be. We were preparing ourselves for

going over to France. We trained there. Had a good time. British were wonderful to us.

02-00:32:58

Meeker: There must have been some speculation amongst your company about where you're going to go. You had mentioned that maybe we're going in through the Alps because you have learned to rappel down a mountainside. Do you recall what the discussion was?

02-00:33:13

Newman: Oh, everybody was hoping the war would end before we had to go in because the Russians were coming in from the east. But I don't think anybody knew. The news was really not very accessible to us. They didn't tell us where we were or what was going to happen. But when we finally got orders to go in we went to Plymouth and got on the ships. So this was a few weeks after the invasion. We came in on the Omaha Beach.

02-00:33:55

Meeker: So you didn't participate in the actual D-Day invasion on June 6<sup>th</sup>?

02-00:34:00

Newman: No. No, we came in after them and relieved the invasion troops.

02-00:34:06

Meeker: So when the invasion happens on June 6<sup>th</sup>, when do you hear about it? Do you hear about it almost immediately?

02-00:34:14

Newman: Yes. You heard on the radio, on BBC or on the Armed Forces radio, that we had invaded but you never knew exactly where you stood on this thing.

02-00:34:26

Meeker: Well, yes. Did it seem like there you are, a soldier, and clearly you're queuing up to be the next in line to participate in this invasion. Did it feel like, from the grunt's point of view, that this invasion's going well?

02-00:34:48

Newman: I think we knew we had a foot hold there. We felt that we were in good hands and that our part would come along. We didn't know exactly what it was going to be. We thought maybe the Germans would surrender.

02-00:35:06

Meeker: Yes. I imagine that's what probably most people kept on hoping.

02-00:35:09

Newman: We hoped. And we kept listening to see if the Russians were coming. Take the heat off.

02-00:35:18

Meeker: Well, most of the German troops, from what I understand, were on the eastern front. They weren't on the western front at that point in time.

02-00:35:23

Newman: They were well prepared on the western front. But, of course, there were feints. There were distractions so that the Germans didn't know exactly where the landing was going to take place. That's a great story in itself.

02-00:35:44

Meeker: Yes. There was Operation Glisten or Glimmer or something like that and a couple of those. So when did you get your orders to cross the Channel and how did you cross the Channel?

02-00:35:57

Newman: Oh, we went on a convoy. I don't remember exactly what the dates were, to tell you the truth. But it was a couple of weeks after.

02-00:36:07

Meeker: So sometime the summer of '44?

02-00:36:10

Newman: Yes. It was in June. It probably was the last two weeks of June. I'm not exactly sure. But we landed at Omaha Beach and, of course, there were huge numbers of vehicles and tanks. We waded ashore. There was no fire when we landed. Of course, you've been prepared for all of this but you really never know what it's going to be like until you get there, until somebody's there trying to kill you. And we walked up the beach and up the hill to go inland and I saw about eight or ten American soldiers asleep on the ground. Well, they were dead. That's the first time I'd ever seen a dead man. I said to the boys, "Okay, fellas, this is where we're going."

02-00:37:16

Meeker: It seemed real, then, I bet, huh?

02-00:37:18

Newman: Right then and there you suddenly know what you're going into.

02-00:37:24

Meeker: So I guess probably the toehold of the Allies was big enough that there was no direct fire coming at you and they might have done some minesweeping on the beach and so you were able to kind of move out there relatively sure that you're not going to get—

02-00:37:45

Newman: You could hear the firing.

02-00:37:46

Meeker: Oh, really? Okay. So it's that close that it was still audible.

02-00:37:48

Newman: Yes.

02-00:37:51

Meeker: And I imagine the beach was probably littered with tanks and—

02-00:37:54

Newman: Everything. Everything. Supplies and tanks and barbed wire.

02-00:38:02

Meeker: And so then what happens to you? Do you set up an encampment or do they send you off to—

02-00:38:06

Newman: Well, we moved inland and I would guess we must have marched two or three miles and set up a base camp. And I think we were there a couple of days. And then we were given orders to move ahead. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division had been one of the assault divisions in the original invasion and we took over their positions, their foxholes, and they were relieved. I think we stayed there maybe one day or two days. Then I got orders to report to the battalion headquarters and got an order to attack at daybreak the next morning. There was a little town, La Meauffe. There was a railroad that ran in front of our position and we were to jump off at 6:00 in the morning. I came back to my command post and I called my lieutenants together and my first sergeant. And this I'll never forget. And you never can tell about a person's reaction to, well, not an emergency, but a difficult situation. And my first sergeant had been a very tough kind of a guy who kept the men in line, probably would have knocked their heads off. And I gave the order to attack. He says, "I can't go." He didn't have it in him.

02-00:40:10

Meeker: Wow.

02-00:40:27

Newman: Anyway, so I had to take care of him. But the next morning we jumped off.

02-00:40:36

Meeker: What sort of intelligence did they give you? What was your task? Was it just you guys with your guns going in there?

02-00:40:43

Newman: We were given a mission to take a church area maybe half a mile away and we were to go forward with two platoons abreast and one in reserve. And we did and we got pinned down with very heavy fire.

02-00:41:05

Meeker: Was that expected? Had they given you intelligence that said, "Listen, we estimate there's 500 Germans in that town"?

02-00:41:10

Newman: They didn't know what to expect. We did. We started out at six o'clock in the morning and we got pinned down immediately with heavy fire. There was a road that came up in my sector and all of a sudden, out of a clear blue sky, who comes down the road in a jeep but the colonel, regimental commander. I don't know what the dickens he was doing down there but he got shot.

02-00:41:48

Meeker: Killed?

02-00:41:49

Newman: He was court martialed later for being up there. But he got badly wounded. We were all pinned down and here he comes down in this jeep.

02-00:42:03

Meeker: Sort of MacArthur style, right?

02-00:42:04

Newman: Yes. Anyway, we moved ahead. It was pretty tough fighting and actually lost quite a few men in that first battle. But we called for artillery and got some tanks up there and we were able to keep moving forward. We just would take a position, dig in and wait for further instructions. So the mission of the division—we were in the first army at the time. The mission was going to be to take St. Lo. The city of Saint Lo was the anchor point for the German defenses. We met sporadic resistance as we kept moving forward. When we finally got, oh, I'd say within a quarter of a mile within St. Lo, we were on a ridge overlooking the city. And I'll never forget. They told us to dig in and to put luminous panels of material out in front of our front lines. This is so that the bombers would know not to drop any bombs this side of the panels. So we put our panels down and about eight o'clock in the morning, I tell you, I'll never forget it, there must have been about a thousand American airplanes that came flying over there and they just devastated that town. They just dropped bombs everywhere. And dropped some on us, too. That couldn't be helped. But they virtually annihilated the town of St. Lo. And the next day we were given an order to move in and the Germans had moved back. So we were able to get into the city.

02-00:44:15

Meeker: Did you encounter any resistance when you got into the city? Was there any house to house fighting or anything like that?

02-00:44:20

Newman: No, there wasn't. No, they had backed down. But I'll never forget. I was so tired and there were still some houses standing and we took up positions in the town. And I went into a house and there was a bed with a mattress on it. Well, you always said when you're in combat the thing you're always afraid of was what they called these trip wires because they had what they called a bouncing betty. If you hit the wire, there was like a grenade that shot up and it would disembowel you. And when you're first in combat, you're looking everywhere you walk before you step. You don't want to step on one. After a while, oh, the hell with it. If I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it. But here was this mattress. And I thought, "Oh, my god, I haven't slept on a mattress in so long. I'm going to sleep on that mattress." But then I thought, "Well, gee, maybe it's booby trapped. If I get on there and get blown up." But I just said, "The hell with it. I'm going to jump on the mattress," and I slept. [laughter] Anyway, we were there for I think a day or two. And then I was given orders—

02-00:45:38

Meeker: Was there any of the local French population around?

02-00:45:40

Newman: Oh, yes, there were. They came out.

02-00:45:42

Meeker: They did. And I imagine they probably had left the city when the bombing was happening.

02-00:45:47

Newman: They had, yes. They knew that it was clear. But then we were given orders—

02-00:45:52

Meeker: How did they greet you? Were they just—

02-00:45:54

Newman: Oh, they loved us.

02-00:45:56

Meeker: Yes?

02-00:45:57

Newman: Yes.

02-00:45:58

Meeker: I mean, I imagine they must have experienced some post-traumatic stress.

02-00:46:02

Newman: Oh, terrible. And I'll have to tell you that my unit is still—there are not many of us left—but they have reunions periodically. And the people from S.t Lo come to our reunions and they say, "We'll never forget you." They decorate the graves of my unit every year on Memorial Day. And they say, "If you come to France, you are our guest. You stay with us." And their kids are the same way. They don't forget. But then we were given orders to proceed to—the Germans took position along the river called the River Vire. And my unit was actually at the head of the regiment. It was a few days after that that we hit just terrible resistance. And we got thrown back. We'd gone from kind of an elevated area down through a valley and came up on the other side. I'd sent scouts out and they said everything looked okay. We came through there and just hit terrible fighting.

02-00:47:33

Meeker: What was the nature? Was it guns or tanks or mortars or—

02-00:47:35

Newman: Oh, machine guns and artillery and mortars and everything. It was a defensive hold for the Germans to cover their withdrawal. And so we had to fall back to the other side of the valley and get some tanks and some help and artillery to go back in there the next day, which we did. And that's when I got terribly shot.

02-00:48:11

Meeker: So the next day, would you mind telling how this happened? How you were?

02-00:48:20

Newman: I had my communications sergeant with me, the radio man. And when you're given an attack order, you're given what they call an azimuth. It's a compass reading. You have to go along that route because there are other troops that are going along their route. You don't want to go this way and that way. But in Normandy you have what they call hedge rows. They don't have fences there. These are hedges that could be four or five feet wide that have been there for centuries and you have to go through them. The fields are on the other side of the hedges. So we were going through and I was out with my communication sergeant. You don't know exactly where your troops are. They're all around you. And we came through there and the Germans were on the other side. And the next thing I knew I was down on the ground with a bullet hole right through my left shoulder near my heart. Sergeant took off and I was down on the ground. I saw this bullet hole here and I thought, "Well, that's the end of it." But fortunately—

02-00:49:42

Meeker: What did you do? It sounds like you weren't raised in like a religious household. Did you pray or were you just sort of reflecting on your life or were you just—

02-00:49:53

Newman: Well, they always say that there are no atheists in foxholes. You say, "God, if you're here, help me." But I was on the ground. It's almost like a story. I was going into the battle after the first day at Vire. You have an aid packet on your belt that you use that has bandages and sulfa pills. One of my sergeants had lost his arm and I had bandaged him up. And we're going into this battle and one of the privates came up to me. He says, "Hey, Captain, you don't have an aid pouch." I said, "Oh, I won't need it." He said, "I've got an extra one. You'd better take it." And it saved my life.

02-00:50:45

Meeker: Wow. So you administered first aid to yourself?

02-00:50:49

Newman: Well, you have a little shovel in the back of your pack and I was able to take the shovel and get down into a little ditch and kind of get down far enough, because the guy who'd shot me was still over there.

02-00:51:07

Meeker: How far away was he?

02-00:51:09

Newman: Oh, maybe twenty or thirty yards. Pretty close. So there was still stuff coming at me. I was able to get out of the line of fire and stay in that little ditch. My men couldn't get out to get me at that point but several hours later they did get rid of the fire and they came out with a raincoat and rolled me over and put me in the raincoat, crawled out to a road and the medics were there. They gave me the plasma and put me on a stretcher. And we started to go back to where the headquarters were. The Germans at that time had been there a long time and they zeroed in on these roads with artillery and mortar and these stretcher bearers who were carrying me and the fire started to come in on the road and they dropped me in the middle of the road, dived for the ditches. They'd hear the stuff coming in. They'd pick me up and run ten yards and drop me again. I thought, "What a terrible way to die out here in the middle of the road." I couldn't move. Anyway, they kept pulling me out and finally we got back to the aid station. There was a jeep there. They put me on the front of the jeep and they took me back to the field hospital. They put me on some kind of a machine to see if you have any shrapnel left in you, a metal detector, I guess, and that was the last I remember. And then I woke up. I guess it was maybe two days later.

02-00:53:17

Meeker: Well, prior to this it sounds like you were conscious the whole time.

02-00:53:22

Newman: I was the whole time.

02-00:53:22

Meeker: So I imagine at a certain point, after seeing yourself that you were shot, and where it was, you probably thought that it was over, right? But then time passes and you're like—

02-00:53:34

Newman: I put the aid packet here, here—

02-00:53:39

Meeker: On the other side.

02-00:53:40

Newman: Because the bullet went through me and through my lung. You do what you can. It was all you could.

02-00:53:51

Meeker: Yes. Well, clearly you didn't give up immediately.

02-00:53:55

Newman: Oh, no. You never give up. You're fighting for your life. And then I remember waking up and there was an Army captain sitting on my bed. And I said, "Where am I?" And he told me. He said, "You're in such and such a field hospital." I said, "Am I going to live or die?" He said, "You're going to live." He said, "We got to you fast enough that we could save your life."

02-00:54:27

Meeker: I imagine the danger would have been blood loss at that point?

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Newman: I guess so.

02-00:54:32

Meeker: Yes. How did you feel when the captain gave you the news that it looked like you were going to pull through?

02-00:54:40

Newman: I was so thrilled. But then the thing that I was worried about with my mother and dad, because they wouldn't allow you to write or to phone or anything, and I thought, "Gee." My parents were elderly." They got news that your kid has been shot I thought they might have a heart attack or something. That's another story. But I was in that hospital for several days and then they had an ambulance plane that flew me back to England. But I was full of tubes and stuff coming all out of me. I didn't know what was going to happen. But all you can do is follow orders. They told me what to do.

02-00:55:35

Meeker: Sure. And your fate sounded like it was pretty much out of your hands at that point.

02-00:55:39

Newman: It is. Totally. And then I was in the hospital in a town called Leominster. And I had only one friend in all of the European theater that I knew where I could locate him, and he was a Colonel in the Air Force, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. And I sent him a penny postcard and I said, "I'm in the hospital in Leominster. And if you could ever get over here, I sure would like to see you so you could contact my folks." And a few days later, a fighter plane came roaring down over the hospital and these guys come out. The flyboys. They had whiskey and beer and everything. They came in and I really fell apart I was so happy to see them. And they said, "Well, we'll call your folks and tell them you're going to be okay." I was in that hospital for several weeks. And then they said, "You're going home." I couldn't go back to duty. And so I was sent to the Baxter General Hospital for chest injuries in Washington. And I stayed there for several months and then I was okay to go back to limited service. And they transferred me back to Fort Hood, Texas as a Plans and Training officer. And then I was appointed to go to Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as a student. I did very well in the program there and they asked me to stay on as an instructor. So I was still a captain at the time I was training field officers, majors and up, and it was fun. I could get out and play golf. All I had to do was teach a few hours a week. And then the war was over and they came to me and said, "We'd like you to stay in the Army, take a full commission here." And I thought, "I think I've had enough of this life and I've got to go back to San Francisco." So I opted out. There I was.

02-00:58:28

Meeker: That seems like a great place to stop for today. Thank you very much.

Interview #2: June 18, 2010

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03-00:00:00

Meeker: So today is Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2010. This is Martin Meeker interviewing Walter Newman for the Regional Oral History Office. This is tape number three. So as I mentioned, we wrapped up last time we met, last week, with you telling your story about your service in the military. You got to the end of your story and you said that you had recovered from your injuries and they had continued you on service. At one point in time they offered you a commission to become basically a career officer in the military and I think you had mentioned that you said, "Thanks. I had a very memorable time but I'm ready to go home now." So what I'd like to do is just follow up a little bit on your military service.

03-00:01:00

Newman: Of course.

03-00:01:01

Meeker: And you had said that it was a turning point in your life. So maybe the place to begin is to ask you what do you mean by it being a turning point in your life. Over the course of your life, then, how did the experience of serving not only in the military but in World War II, and being wounded in the process, how do you think that's impacted you in the years since then? It's a big question, so you can take it from a couple of different angles if you'd like.

03-00:01:32

Newman: I think I can answer that. As I think I may have mentioned, I was extremely lucky to survive. I had a very severe wound that could have been fatal if it had been a half an inch higher or lower, left or right. But I almost felt as though I had been delivered, that this was more than just luck, that it may have been divine intervention of some kind, because when I went to the medics for exams, they were always amazed at how I was still alive, because the bullet just missed my heart and my great vessels. Something like that is extremely emotional. It's very painful when it happens but you never forget it. And even for many, many years, even until today, you can still feel the location of when that happened. So it's a reminder of exactly what happened. But the whole military experience did change my life to the extent that a hero is a twenty-two year old man commanding men who are, in most cases, older than I was, putting their lives on the line, putting my life on the line for America. This was our duty. We were proud to do it. And we did it and we will always be proud of that fact that we were good soldiers, that we performed our duty nobly and that we did complete our mission. I'm sorry that I couldn't have continued to lead my men but my wounds were so severe that I was sent back to the

United States. But as I think I mentioned, all of my friends who were company commanders were killed subsequently when my unit went all the way from Normandy to the Rhine and then to the Battle of the Bulge. So they experienced a lot of the very severe battles and there is a brotherhood of men that I think comes about from having depended on each other for your lives, really, and I've always felt that way and my men feel that way about me. There aren't many of us left, because I was even a little younger than they are, but there's still that comradeship of having been in very traumatic circumstances and that there is a brotherhood of being a good combat veteran.

03-00:05:31

Meeker: Of your company, how many survived the war itself?

03-00:05:36

Newman: It's hard to say how many actually survived, but I would guess maybe ten percent. So I take a lot of pride in my military background and today I'm doing as much as I possibly can for veterans to help them to have a good life. I've mentioned several times the fact that the conflicts that America's in now are totally different than the wartime experiences that I had. The enemy in our war had a uniform. They spoke German. If you saw a German, he was going to try to kill you or you were going to try to kill him. In these wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, there are no uniforms. These are native people and your enemy could be a child, could be a woman, could be an elderly person who has an explosive and you have to shoot first and ask later if you suspect that somebody is endangering you. So I have a great deal of sympathy for these people and I'm doing everything I possibly can in the medical field of the military to help them put their lives back in order and get back into society.

03-00:07:28

Meeker: In what organizations are you participating?

03-00:07:32

Newman: Well, at the present time I'm on the board of an organization called the Veterans Research Institute, and that's connected with the Veterans Administration here at San Francisco, at Fort Miley, in which there are some 200 research professionals from the University of California San Francisco who are doing research on diseases that affect veterans. And this is the largest installation in the United States doing this kind of work. There are other organizations, other VAs, but they're not nearly as well staffed as they are here. And we're doing tremendous amount of good work, particularly in the area of neurological problems that affect veterans. I think I mentioned that we're told that as many as a third of the men and women returning from combat today are affected with post traumatic brain syndrome. It's a very serious thing, to the point that people can't concentrate, they can't accomplish a mission. There's a lot of suicide, there's a lot of alcoholism associated with it and we're doing everything we can to alleviate these problems. So in that regard I still keep up the association with the medical military group.

03-00:09:25

Meeker: So what's the nature of your volunteer work?

03-00:09:28

Newman: I'm on the board of this organization that has a very significant budget and I'm one of the non-medical directors of that. Furthermore, I'm on the board of the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation. In San Francisco, we have a community hospital. It's one of the best, particularly it's trauma center. And we always have said if you're in an accident or you're in a gunshot wound or a stabbing, get to the trauma center at the General Hospital. If you get there, they'll save your life.

So I don't know if I've mentioned the fact that Ellen was the designer/creator and executor of a program called Hearts in San Francisco. The song "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" gave her the idea that the city really needed an event, that the city needed some life. Ellen is a go-getter and she organized this thing with Nancy Bechtle, and they had built and designed by leading artists 126 hearts that were put around the City. Anyway, the only reason I mention it, that the proceeds of this went to the General Hospital Foundation. Under the seismic requirements, all the hospitals have to be seismically upgraded by 2015. Well, the bond issue for \$850 million for the General Hospital San Francisco came before the voters shortly after this heart project that Ellen started came up and over eighty-five percent of the voters voted in favor of that. So we're in the process of building that new hospital and I'm helping them. I'm on that Board. So that's another.

03-00:12:00

Meeker: That's excellent. With your work with the Veterans Research Institute, I understand that you're on the board and I imagine you probably also help in philanthropy for that organization. I wonder if you ever had any opportunity to—I know that this is more the domain of the medical professional—but if you've ever had the opportunity to engage with any of the veterans who come through that institute?

03-00:12:27

Newman: That's a good question. I'm also on the board of the City College of San Francisco Foundation. The governor of California has a program called Troops to College and, as I mentioned, these returning vets have a very hard time putting their lives back in order. Getting them to college is one of the most important things that we can do. The community colleges in our state are a great way for people to get back on a career path. But it's hard for them. Colonel Bucky Peterson, who heads up this program for the State, contacted me about a year ago and said, "Can you help me get a program started at City College in San Francisco to help the vets?" So I said, "You bet I can." I made an appointment with Chancellor Don Griffin, who is a psychologist himself, and who served at the Veterans Administration previous to his teaching work. We went out to see him and told him what we wanted to do. He said, "I

understand it. It's critical. It's going to be the number one project for the college." So taking it a step further, he appointed a very dynamic man on his staff, George Rush, who is the football coach, to lead the charge.

Furthermore, I got the NCIRE people from the Veterans Administration to look at this project that we were going to do at City College and they said, "We'll help you staff it. We'll get the counselors, the psychologists and so forth, to come over and work at the college instead of having to bring the vets over to the VA." So the chancellor selected two beautiful classrooms and he's donated that space to build a veterans research center where these vets can meet together. They can be counseled, they can learn about their GI benefits, they can spend time together, defuse themselves, as it were. George Rush got all of the craft unions of the city, the electrical, the plumbers, the carpenters, the painters, to donate the material and their time to build this and I went out and raised the money. I talked to a bunch of veterans that I knew and every one of them sent me a check. We've got all the money we need. And Ellen, through her great contacts, contacted IKEA and they are going to donate all of the furnishings for this project. As we speak, it's getting ready. It'll open in a couple of weeks.

And the veterans at the university are so excited, so enthusiastic about this, because at the present time at City College, there are some 600 veterans. The Chancellor said next year there'll be over a thousand and then probably more after that. And this is going to give them an opportunity to be together, to exchange ideas and to help themselves get through the opportunities that the college offers. So I'm very proud of that. It's exciting.

03-00:16:49

Meeker:

It sounds to me like probably once this is established word will spread amongst the community of veterans in the Bay Area and it might well attract people to school who previously didn't intend to go back to school.

03-00:17:04

Newman:

True. And what we had hoped to do, and I think will do, is to make this the model of a veterans center that all the community colleges in California can visualize what they can do and make this thing much more universal than just City College. But very few people recognize that there are over a hundred thousand students at City College of San Francisco and they say that one out of every two people in San Francisco has been touched by this College, either themselves or somebody in their family. So, to me, education is one of the most important things that we can do in this country to keep America ahead and the community colleges are the easiest way for a young person to get on a career path to get a good education and then go on to a four year college to really get career training.

03-00:18:17

Meeker: There was an alumni group, right, of members of your company who would meet regularly. Is that correct?

03-00:18:38

Newman: Yes. Yes. They still do.

03-00:18:40

Meeker: And they still do. When was the first time that you decided to meet with this group in person?

03-00:18:50

Newman: Well, the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which as I mentioned, is a National Guard unit from the middle west, meets in the middle west. I think their conventions are probably every two years. I'm not exactly sure. But after the war, they started to have these conventions and my company has a man by the name of Kenneth Faulker who was promoted. He had a field commission in combat. He was a sergeant and then his lieutenant was killed and he was promoted to lieutenant. And Ken Faulker is a correspondent par excellence. He loves to write. And he has held our group together. He writes a newsletter every single month and we all send our current information to him about what's going on.

So these conventions came and went but I didn't really want to go. There were so many vivid memories of people that I had lost, friends that I had lost, that I didn't want to have to go through that. After several years, the guys called me and they said, "You know, Captain, you're our man. You've got to come back. We want to see you." I guess it might have been ten years until I finally decided to do it. And it really was a great experience because they loved me and I loved them, and they hadn't seen me. I think I may have mentioned, one of the men came up to me, he said, "Captain, I was on the front handle of the stretcher that took you out." He said, "I never thought I'd see you alive again." And those are things you just don't forget.

So we've stayed in touch. There was another convention that took place at the Queen Mary and Ellen and I went down there. We've been to three or four different conventions now. But my group, my company, has the greatest cohesiveness of any company in that whole division, largely because of Ken Faulker, but I think to some extent because of me. Because when I say that I'm coming, as Ellen says, they bring their wives, their children and their grandchildren to meet Captain Newman. Because there was such a deep devotion among us. I would have given my life for these men, and they for me, and we haven't forgotten that. So there's this deep attachment. But I think there might be twenty people left now. I don't know. They're all on crutches and wheelchairs. It doesn't make me feel so good to go back there.

03-00:22:32

Meeker: When there's reunions, whether it's a class reunion or a reunion of the men that you served with, there's always this balance in the conversations you have with people between sort of revisiting the old days and then kind of bringing people up to date with what you've been up to these days. I wonder, when the reunion is about service in the military during wartime, and there are difficult memories to deal with, deaths of friends and your own injuries and just the horror of war overall, I wonder when you go back to these conventions with your fellow veterans, is there a lot of conversation about the war experience itself or is it just sort of enough to be together? Is it more about today or is there a lot of conversation about what went on back in World War II?

03-00:23:33

Newman: I think it's just the friendship of being together. It's sixty-six years. If you haven't said it by now, you're probably not going to say it. And it's just to say hello and be together and sort of share what we've been doing for the last couple of years or so. Ellen and I are very active people. I'm eighty-eight years old, but we're going all the time. And she's eighty-two but very few people do as much as she does. Most of these folks are small town people and I just write my letters about going to Hong Kong and going to Korea and they just love to hear about it because they don't do it. I'm a Californian and they're mostly middle western people. So there's that distance but there's still that brotherhood that goes. Of course, I was only in combat for probably less than two months until I was almost killed. Many of these men went for over a year or so. So I didn't share in those experiences with them.

03-00:25:01

Meeker: Sure. But it sounds like it was such a profound experience that it's enough just to be with this group of people.

03-00:25:09

Newman: Exactly, exactly.

03-00:25:11

Meeker: Even given the difference of your background, where you were raised and the current life that you live.

03-00:25:17

Newman: It's impossible for someone who hasn't been in combat to understand what is involved. I can only speak from personal experience, but Normandy is one of the most beautiful places that you could ever visit, but the horror of being there with artillery and mortars and machine guns and the smell of smoke and the screaming of wounded and the dead animals around that are rotted and the fact that you're in a hole. I've said to people an infantry soldier's war is usually maybe ten yards around him. He's in a foxhole. He doesn't know where his other men are. The enemy could be right around the corner. You

just don't know what's going to happen next. You just have to be prepared for whatever is going to happen.

I remember when we first went into combat, everybody wants to hope that they're going to come out alive, and we used to say, "Well, what would you trade to know that you're going to come out alive? An arm? A leg? Or what?" And any one of us would have given an arm or a leg to come out alive.

So it's a harrowing experience for anyone who's done it and I can certainly understand how these fellows and women suffer these mental problems. In World War I, they used to call it shell shock and in World War II they called it combat fatigue and now they call it post traumatic brain syndrome. But it all comes about from the emotion, the fear of being shot, killed, the trauma of the noise and the shock of these shells. You never know which one's going to have your number on it. It's a very traumatic experience.

03-00:27:59

Meeker: You had shown us a box that I think a friend of yours put together that had your service medals in it.

03-00:28:15

Newman: Yes.

03-00:28:15

Meeker: I'm going to ask you to be immodest and share with me what medals you received from your service, and for a generation that maybe doesn't know the significance of them, can you tell you us what they were?

03-00:28:35

Newman: Well, the medals don't mean anything. It's just a recognition of your service.

03-00:28:41

Meeker: Well, I saw that you still have the Purple Heart, which—

03-00:28:44

Newman: Yes. I have the Purple Heart, which is something that any American could treasure. It shows that you've been wounded in combat. I have the Bronze Star for service. Then the medals for serving in that particular theater. And then last year, just really at this time, the French government recognized my service, sent us two tickets to come to Paris and receive the French Legion of Honor, which was an unforgettable experience.

03-00:29:34

Meeker: Maybe you could tell about this. How did the French government learn about your particular service and situation? And then maybe tell us a little bit about the ceremony that you participated in.

03-00:29:47

Newman:

Sure, sure. I think the French government, under President Sarkozy, is recognizing the fact that America really saved France. And they're trying to recognize the service of Americans who fought there. The French Consul General here was advised of my service and the next thing I knew I was meeting with them and the next thing I knew we received advice from the French embassy in Washington that Ellen and I were being sent to France to receive this Legion of Honor medal. They sent us two business class tickets, which were upgraded to first class on Air France. I called my two sons and said, "We're getting you guys two tickets. You're going coach." But they were upgraded to business class.

So on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June of 2009, the French Consul General, his assistant, and several other French people picked us up and drove us to the airport, where there was a reception for us, and the head of Air France was there to welcome us aboard and we got on the plane, an Air France plan for Paris. And as we were on the tarmac, the captain of the airplane came down to my seat and he said, "Mr. Newman, I know why you're going to France." He says, "I'm a Frenchman," and he said, "I personally want to thank you for what you did to save my country." He said, "I'd like to announce on the PA system that you're on board," but he said, "these are kind of traumatic times and rather than alarm our passengers, I think we'll just leave it at this." And, of course, that just meant so much to me.

When we arrived in Paris—we went a day early because I wanted to rest up for all this fanfare—and when we arrived at the airport, I didn't know if anybody was going to meet us or what. And sure enough, there was a delegation there and they welcomed us. One of the people in this delegation was a captain in the French army in uniform. He came up and he spoke perfect English and he said, "Captain Newman, I'm going to be your attaché for the entire time you're here. We'll see that everything you need is taken care of." They had a bus for us, just for my family, and they took us to this hotel where the group was going to be.

Then the next day, the arrangements had been made for us to go to the tomb of Napoleon, where the ceremony was going to take place. Of course, we had no idea what was happening. It was just we were there to get a medal. There were twenty people in the group. I think there were six Americans and the balance were Canadians and British. They drove us over to the tomb of Napoleon, which was a huge courtyard, and we walked in and there was a large group of French. And when I walked in to this courtyard, there was a company of navy, French navy, French air force, French army, and maybe coast guard. I'm not sure. And then a huge French band. And there must have been several hundred people who were associated with this event. We were escorted, the people who were going to receive the medals, to their seats and my captain, French captain, stood behind me. Then the dignitaries came in. The secretary of defense, the general of the army, the admiral of the navy, the

air force and then Americans also were there. Steven Spielberg and—oh, gosh—the Band of Brothers. Tom Hanks. Tom Hanks was there. They were sitting right next to Ellen over in the visitors group.

Anyway, the generals made their tour around inspecting the troops, and then the thing that really kind of broke me up. Here I was sitting there and I thought to myself, “My goodness, this is unbelievable.” First they played “O Canada.” The band played “O Canada.” Then it played the British national anthem and then it played the “Star Spangled Banner” and the “Marseillaise.” It just really affected me. I thought, “Here these allies saved the world, and here we are sixty-five years later and they haven’t forgotten.”

03-00:36:17

Meeker: And they’re still allies.

03-00:36:18

Newman: Yes, yes. And then the presentation of the medals. And each service person received the medal from the commanding person of that military. The commanding general of the French army pinned it on me and gave me a couple of kisses. And then they had the speeches. And after the ceremony, we adjourned to a beautiful grove of trees off to the side of Napoleon’s tomb, where they had the most beautiful champagne cocktail reception for all of us. And we’ve all been to great parties but I’ve never been to anything quite like that. And the people that came up to shake my hand, Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, Senator Bob Dole, Mrs. Eisenhower, Anne Eisenhower, General {Consecci?}. They were all these for this event. It really was just fantastic. Then that evening, they had chartered one of the Bateau Mouche boats for our group and gave us platform seats and we went up the Seine. Then that was the end of that day.

The next morning, they had buses to take us to the train to take us over to Omaha Beach. It must have been the Presidential train, because I’ve never been on a more beautiful car in a train and they served us just a beautiful lunch on board the train. And when we got to Omaha Beach, the Americans had taken over the arrangements and that was kind of screwed up. The French had everything just by the numbers and the Americans, well, they got me an escort and we sat up on the platform. I sat on the platform. It was a very beautiful experience because the presidents of France, the United States, the prime ministers of Canada and Great Britain, all were there and gave speeches. The Prince of Wales. They were standing not more than ten yards from me. And it was a beautiful ceremony. The one thing that really kind of grabbed me was when we were waiting for the speeches, I think it was three Canadian jets flew over and then three British jets, fighter jets, flew over and then three American jets flew over. And as they got over there, one of them did the lost pilot maneuver, where the two planes continue on and this one just goes up out of sight. And that is a very emotional thing. And then the speeches took place. One of the things that I had hoped would happen, I

wanted to shake hands with President Obama, and he did come over to where I was sitting. I stood up and said, “Mr. President, I want to thank you for all you’re doing for us.” And he saw my name and he said, “Mr. Newman, thank you for what you did for us,” which made me feel very nice.

We went back to Paris.

03-00:40:39

Meeker: How did it feel to be back at Omaha Beach? I assume it looked completely differently than you had seen it. I’m also guessing this is the first—

03-00:40:48

Newman: We didn’t see very much of it. We were up on the platform. They did the ceremony and then we left. I had been to the cemetery, paid my respects to my men that are burried there previously, but we didn’t have time to do any of that. We just were sitting up on the platform. We heard the speeches and off we went.

But we went back to Paris. Then the next day there was an optional trip planned for us, which we took, to go to Versailles. It was just our group. The tour was led by the head of the museum and they took us to some places that I’m sure most people never see. The most magnificent fountain areas. There must have been fifty different fountains all turned on just for us. Then they had a fabulous luncheon in the stable of the Versailles, which had been converted into a restaurant. This was just for our group. Then we went back to Paris and said goodbye to the group. The French had been so nice. The tickets that they gave us were open, so we could stay as long as we wanted, so we left the group. The group was going back to the US, and we stayed for another five days in Paris and then we came home.

03-00:42:31

Meeker: That sounds like a remarkable experience.

03-00:42:33

Newman: Oh, it really was.

03-00:42:37

Meeker: Do you feel like it kind of put a closure on it? I know that it still impacts you, you’re still living with it. Did it sort of bookend that sort of experience in your life in some meaningful fashion?

03-00:42:58

Newman: I think it was very meaningful to know that the French so many years later still appreciated our putting our lives on the line for them. And I don’t know if I told you, but at some of our reunions of the company, the French people have come over for those reunions. My unit was instrumental in the capturing of the city of Saint Lo. And these people, these French, are so appreciative of

what we did that they decorate the graves of our dead soldiers over there and they have said, "Look, if you come to France, you are our guests. We will never forget and our children will remember and our grandchildren will remember." So there's still a lot of emotion on the part of the French, although a lot of people think the French are not that emotional. But I have to tell you, we were traveling in a bus around Paris and when we went to Versailles and had an American flag and a French flag, people were jogging or walking their dogs and they would stop and they would applaud. It made us feel that the French do appreciate what we are doing and what we've done.

03-00:44:41

Meeker: So it was at '46? Is that when you finished your period of service?

03-00:44:50

Newman: Forty-five.

03-00:44:52

Meeker: Forty-five, okay. And what time of year? Had the war ended yet?

03-00:44:58

Newman: Well, VE Day was May the 8<sup>th</sup> and I think I got out in June.

03-00:45:04

Meeker: Okay. So the bomb had not been dropped in Hiroshima or Nagasaki yet.

03-00:45:07

Newman: No.

03-00:45:09

Meeker: So you were back in San Francisco when VJ Day happened.

03-00:45:13

Newman: Correct.

03-00:45:14

Meeker: Can you describe what you were doing when you found out that the war in Asia had in fact ended?

03-00:45:26

Newman: Well, everybody was overjoyed to finally have peace in the world. I don't remember exactly where I was at the time. I was probably on vacation or something. I don't remember.

03-00:45:41

Meeker: Now that there's peace in the world, now that you're out of the military and you're still quite young, you have your life ahead of you, I kind of wonder how did you feel and what did you want to do at that point in time?

03-00:45:58

Newman: Well, I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. I had a lot of friends and was sort of kind of getting re-associated and quite a few of my friends had been in the military. One in particular was one of my closest friends. His name was Harry {Camp?}. And Harry just died a few months ago. And Harry and I had been buddies through school and, as a matter of fact, his family lived up on the corner here. And we used to spend time together in their house. And his father called me one day and said, "Walter, you and Harry are really close, close friends and I have this company that I want you two guys to learn about and I want you to end up running it." He said, "I have a lot of respect for you." I said, "Well, Mr. {Camp?}, you know I don't have a career path at this point. I may decide to go to business school or something." He said, "Well, I think you ought to do this. It's a good business and you'd have a nice future." I said, "Well, I'll give it a try. I don't have any other plans." And his son and I said, "Well, let's try it."

It was a business that I didn't know anything about. It was women's millinery and the name of the company was Consolidated Millinery Company. They had leased departments, concession departments in department stores all over the country. And one of the largest ones was with the Emporium Capwell Company here in San Francisco and the East Bay. So they said, "Well, we're going to put you in a training program working under one of our top people in the East Bay." So I said, "Well, I'll give it a go. I don't know anything about women's hats, but here I am."

03-00:48:17

Meeker: Was it merchandizing or management or—

03-00:48:21

Newman: It was management.

03-00:48:23

Meeker: Management.

03-00:48:23

Newman: But it was really merchandizing women's hats, which were very popular at that time. It was a big business. So I started commuting. I was living with my family at the time. And commuted to Oakland. I tried it for about a year and I said, "Gee, I don't think this is for me."

03-00:48:55

Meeker: Why do you say that?

03-00:48:58

Newman: Well, it was interesting. But it really wasn't very stimulating for me. Being on the sales floor in a women's hat department didn't seem like a great direction that I was going to follow. So I said to Mr. {Camp?}, "I really appreciate your

offer but I don't think this is the right thing for me." And so I gave him notice and I left.

I think I told you that I had a lot of agricultural background in my family and it was an area that I really enjoyed. I liked being out of doors, I liked working with animals, I liked working with people. My family really wanted me to take over the Simon Newman Company in Newman and I really was prepared for this, having spent two years at Davis and I knew a lot about it, having worked on the ranches, and knew the properties, knew the people. And so my uncle, Louis Newman, who was the president of the company, said, "Walter, we want you to come down to Newman and take over." So I said, "Well, let's do it." And the company bought me a house and it happened that the woman who had helped when I was a child, had been a nurse in my family, she was a Frenchwoman, had gone into other things when I went off to school. Then when I went to Newman, she said, "I'd like to come down and keep house for you," because I was going to be living a bachelor. And I said, "Fine." So she came down and she cooked for me and kept the house.

So the Newman Company, Simon Newman Company, was a very diversified kind of an agricultural company that had grown up from the days when my grandfather started the business. But one of the biggest things involved was the department store. They had a big feed mill. I think we had four or five big dairies, a big walnut orchard, big beef cattle business, a big range, and then all kinds of farming land. And we had a pretty good organization. There were some very smart farm people. And so I was deeply involved in all of that stuff in a second level management. My uncle held on to things pretty tightly but he wanted me to take over.

So I lived in Newman. Being a pretty aggressive kind of a person, I got involved in a lot of stuff. I started a Rotary club down there that today is still going very strong. I was on the Republican Central Committee for the County. They wanted me to run for Congress. I was with the Housing Authority in the County and built a number of homes in the community for people. And Newman was a very small town and I had come from San Francisco and I really wanted some things to keep me busy. I played golf down there, joined the country club in Modesto. I had a very nice life but it was small town. Really small town.

03-00:53:33

Meeker:

Were you dating at all? Were there any young women you were interested in in Newman?

03-00:53:38

Newman:

Well, one of my closest friends was an obstetrician over in Modesto and he was a bachelor and he knew a lot of the ladies. So I had a very good time down there. I had a nice live in. She wasn't living in but a very good friend. So that was fun. I'd go over to Modesto for the weekend and that sort of thing.

Then I'd come up to San Francisco because my family lived here and that went on for, oh, let me see—I think I went down there in '46 or seven. And then I was introduced to Ellen on one of my visits up here. Ellen, I don't know if I've told you about her.

[End Audio File 3]

Begin Audio File 4 06-18-2010.mp3

04-00:00:00

Meeker: So before we get into the story of you meeting Ellen, which we're looking forward to hearing, just a few more things about coming back home and transitioning from what was a very intense military experience during war to you being out of the military and the United States being in peacetime. It was a term that maybe Harding or one of the Presidents during that period of time invented, which was normalcy, right? I think it was after World War I. That the United States needs to get back to normalcy. And that means that after wars, there's sort of a reluctance, historically, to sort of talk about the war experience. Like, really, let's just get started again. Let's get people back to work. There maybe hasn't been that many marriages during the wartime, now there's going to be a lot more. There's going to be a lot of kids. This certainly happened after World War II with the burst of marriages and baby boom and all that kind of stuff. And I wonder, to what extent did you feel like, when you returned, that people were interested in hearing about your experiences in the war or did you experience it in the sense that you and maybe the people around you just wanted to get back to something normal? So how did you adjust?

04-00:01:43

Newman: Well, most of my friends were my age and almost all of them had some kind of military experience during that period from '42 to '46. Many of them had been in the Navy. My friend Harry {Camp?} had been a bomber pilot. And it was a period of about three or four years out of our lives that was away from San Francisco. I think we came back and we sort of wanted to put that all behind us. I don't recall ever really sitting down and talking about the war or combat experience with anybody. I was the only infantry person that I knew. Everybody else had been in the Navy or in the Air Force or some other branch of the service. I didn't feel any need to talk to anybody about my experiences. And I don't think anybody really was interested. I think they just kind of left you alone. That's over with and let's get on with life. And we wanted to pick up our social connections, start dating, go to some parties, and have some fun and get your career going. We all got jobs and it was a very normal life very quickly, I would say.

04-00:03:27

Meeker: So it sounds like it was about ten years or so before you go back to one of these reunions and maybe then start to maybe talk about your experiences a little bit?

04-00:03:40

Newman: I think that's a good analysis. I never thought of that.

04-00:03:47

Meeker: Okay. Let's see what else did I have left here. Did you have anything that you wanted to ask or add to follow-up about what we were talking about here?

04-00:03:58

Stein: I have one question, actually. You were telling us a little bit about the work that you do currently with veterans, particularly with some of the trouble that people have returning back.

04-00:04:14

Newman: Yes.

04-00:04:15

Stein: And I'm curious. One of the people that we spoke to doing some of the background interviews mentioned that they thought that you were motivated in large part because of your experiences coming back, or the experience of World War II veterans coming back and maybe not feeling like society was ready to talk about your experiences or find ways to help people deal with some of the traumas that they had been through. So I'm just curious if you have any reflections on your experience coming back compared to some of the people that you are working with now.

04-00:04:53

Newman: That's a very good question. There's a major difference between the returning veterans from World War II and the people that are coming back from the military now. And I'm very disappointed in America because I don't feel that America is really behind the troops that are over there now. They say that less than one percent of the population is really touched by our military activities in the Middle East. When we came back, we were heroes. Everybody was very proud of what had happened. There was elation over the victory and people honored you as returning veterans. The ones that came back from Vietnam were almost treated without respect and I think there's some of that today. I don't think that the people that are coming back from overseas today get the respect that they deserve. People don't know what they're doing. They don't know where the locations of these places are. The news isn't very comprehensive about what's going on. You get some blurbs and then another piece of news comes on. So you read about twenty Allied soldiers being killed in the Kandihar province, but that's it. It doesn't effect you personally. In World War II, people were really affected. Everybody had a cousin or a son or

a friend that was in the military. Now there's very little of that. And so I can understand why these people are having problems. Their service isn't being widely recognized and maybe what I'm doing comes from my feeling that they certainly should be, because this combat is very, very trying on those men, I'm sure. I don't know if that's a good answer.

04-00:07:51

Stein: Yes, that's great.

Okay. So now we want to transition a little bit into your career with Joseph Magnin, which sounds like it began in many ways when you met your wife Ellen. So could you tell us a little bit about meeting her?

04-00:08:13

Newman: Certainly. Well, having grown up in San Francisco, I had a lot of friends who went to Stanford and they would invite me to come down to parties, to dances at Stanford, and so back in 1947, I guess it was, Helen Claster, who was a dear friend of Ellen's, and who I knew, was having a cocktail party. She said to Ellen, "I'm going to introduce you to a really nice guy. I think you're going to like him." And she called me and said, "I'm going to introduce you to a gal I think you're going to really go head over heels for." So I said, "Sure." It was a cocktail party.

And I went there and I met Ellen and I liked her immediately. I had a cousin, my cousin Peter Newman, who was like a brother to me. I never had a brother and Peter lived just a block away from us. So he was at the party and he met Ellen, too. It was just a cocktail party and I met Ellen and I got to know her. And then Peter and I decided to take a trip to Mexico, and while we were gone, I got word that Ellen's mother had suddenly passed away with a heart attack and I wrote her a note, a condolence note from Mexico and said, "I hope I'll have a chance to see you when I come back." And then I don't remember exactly what the circumstances were, but I invited Ellen to some kind of a party at a friend, Jack Euphrats house, and my cousin Peter came along with me. We were domino players, and so Peter and I and Jack started to play dominos and Ellen was left kind of on her own. She said, "What's with these guys? This is my date." And then the next thing I knew, Peter had asked her to go out on a date. And that didn't work out but he said, "Boy, she's terrific." So the next thing I knew, I called her and we went out together. I was living in Newman at the time.

After her mother suddenly passed away, it was a tragedy because Ellen was eighteen years old. She was in her senior year at Stanford and her dad was so distraught by this that he didn't know how he was going to hold the company together because Mrs. Magnin had been a very, very highly skilled fashion designer and had really elevated Joseph Magnin's fashion image and managed it so beautifully that, all of a sudden, here she was gone and they didn't have anyone to replace her. And he was going to sell the company and Ellen said,

“No. I’m going to take over from my mother.” And she left Stanford in her last year and became the fashion buyer of better apparel for Joseph Magnin. She had grown up in the business. She started, she said, licking stamps when she was a little girl and the whole family was built around that business. And so Ellen would work in the store and then she would have to go back to the East Coast for the buys. Now, here she was, an eighteen year old girl just thrown into this. But Ellen’s one of the smartest people you’ll ever know. She has a sense of fashion that very few people have. And manufacturers have told me Ellen would go into their showrooms on Seventh Avenue, they’d have the rack of new clothes, and she’d go through them, pick out the right ones every time. And she established a reputation as being one of the supreme fashion people in the country just at this young age. And here she was going back and forth, and here I was in Newman. I’ll never forget, because one of the things I did for a hobby, I was a duck hunter. Wild ducks are a delicacy and I remember having a brace of wild ducks and came up with them on my shoulder and came up her house in Hillsborough. I don’t think she’d ever seen a duck before. They didn’t really know what to do with them.

Anyway, we started to date and I really had to kind of coordinate it between her trips. She was living in Hillsborough. My family lived in San Francisco and I was in Newman. So I would come up for the weekends and then I would drive down to Hillsborough to see Ellen or pick her up for a date and the poor thing, she worked so hard. I remember she would fall asleep on the way home. She was really under tremendous responsibilities and she was eighteen, nineteen years old, and working every day and going out at night. But we had a good time. And so we dated for almost two years, intermittently, because we were going pretty steady, I would say, but it was all built around the time that she was involved in the business. I knew that I loved her and she loved me but I really wasn’t exactly sure how Ellen, who is this very high fashion person, would like living in Newman, California. And I didn’t know exactly what I would do if I left Newman, California. And we talked about it and I said, “Gosh, if you lived in Newman and we had children, the school system isn’t really that good there. We’d probably have to send our kids away to school.” And she said, “Yes, yes. okay.” And I said, “Gee, I think I know a piece of property where we could build a nice house.” “Yes, okay, okay.” She said, “If that’s what you want to do.” She was ready to do it. She said, “I think I’d like living in Newman.” I said, “You don’t know what it is. This is a town of 1,200 people and most of them don’t have more than a high school education.” I said, “I’m just not sure this is going to work out.”

04-00:16:56

Stein: Did she visit you in Newman?

04-00:16:57

Newman: She came down there a couple of times. But most of the activity that we had was here. We’d go to parties here. We had mutual friends. So finally, I decided I was going to make the move. We’d work it out. So Ellen always

said, "Well, if somebody's going to marry me or ask me to marry them, they're going to have to come up with a dozen roses and get on their knees." So we were going out one night and I had the roses in the back of the car. I popped the question and she said, "I'd love to." So I went to see her father and he only said, "What took you guys so long?" He liked me and he thought I'd be a good husband for Ellen. So we were engaged and there was a lot of parties and stuff. And Cyril said to me, "You know, Walter, you have a good business background." He said, "We're all fashion people and you've done a lot with real estate working in Newman and so forth." He said, "We really would like to have you with us in our company. We need somebody who's kind of a solid business person to keep us on the straight and narrow." Well, I said, "Cyril, I don't know how it would be working with the family." "But Mr. Joseph Magnin said we want you here and Ellen's brothers said fine," so I said, "let's give it a try." I told my family I was going to be leaving Newman, that I was sorry but I saw my life changing. My cousin, Irving Rosenblatt, who was an attorney, took my place. He lived in San Francisco but he would go to Newman two days a week.

So we planned our wedding for October the 15<sup>th</sup> of 1950. Ellen, of course, had no mother and she had to handle all the arrangements herself. We decided we'd like to be married at the Palace Hotel in the Garden Court down there. Well, Cyril was quite a prominent citizen and one of his dearest friends was Ben Swig. Ben Swig owned the Fairmont Hotel. Well, when Ben Swig heard that Ellen and I were going to be married at the Palace Hotel, he was really angry. He said to Cyril, "You can't do that to me. Got to have that wedding at the Fairmont Hotel." We still have the cut of the piece of metal that's used to print the invitations for our wedding in the Palace Hotel but Ben Swig said, "Cyril, I'll make you the best deal in the world. You have the Fairmont Hotel free for your daughter's wedding." Cyril couldn't turn it down. So Ellen said the Fairmont Hotel is run like a schlok shop. She said, "It's terrible. They don't do anything right." And she went up there and she really told them how it had to be run if she was going to have her wedding there. So she did all the arrangements and, of course, we had a lot of friends. And Cyril wanted to invite everybody, including the President, to come to the wedding. On October the 15<sup>th</sup>, we were married. And we had the wedding in the Venetian Room and the reception was in the Gold Room and it was just a beautiful, beautiful wedding. I have a book of our wedding pictures. It was a big wedding. I think there were probably some 300 people. And it was just magnificent. And then Ellen and I took off. The first night we went over to Berkeley to the hotel, the big hotel over there. The Claremont. And I guess Ellen called Cyril to say that we're fine. He said, "You've got to come back. The President's here." Harry Truman was in town. He was on his way to meet MacArthur. And we were in bed. We said, "We're not coming back, Cyril. You tell the President we're sorry. We're busy." And hung up the phone.

So I had planned our honeymoon to take a freighter cruise from New Orleans through the Caribbean and to get off in Cuba and then to fly back to New

York City where her aunt Adele Simpson lived and her cousin Joan {Raines?}, who's like Ellen's sister, lived, and we had the most wonderful honeymoon. This was a delightful Alcoa freighter. I think there were ten passengers on that. And we went to all the different islands. We went to Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Dominican Republic and we got off in Cuba. And, of course, Cuba was under Baptista at the time. It was going like gangbusters. It was wonderful. We stayed at the Nacional Hotel and had a great, great time. And then we flew back to New York from there, spent a few days in New York and came back to San Francisco and started to work.

04-00:24:41

Stein: I suppose before you were a part of the family, did you know the Joseph Magnin stores or did you know the Magnin family? Were these people that your parents knew?

04-00:24:55

Newman: No. None of the above.

04-00:24:58

Stein: None of the above?

04-00:25:02

Newman: I knew Cyril by reputation but I had never met them. And it was only just that I met Ellen and then I met the family. And in the course of my dating I would go down there. They had a swimming pool and we used to go there for weekends. So I knew them pretty well by the time we got married.

04-00:25:29

Stein: Did it feel like a major transition, becoming part of this family who has the President on the phone or who were so involved in San Francisco?

04-00:25:40

Newman: Not at all. No, I don't think so. Cyril was a very, very warm person and he and I struck it off just great. He said, "You're no nonsense," and he said, "I like you. We're going to get along fine." And Don and I were fine. I was the best man at his wedding.

04-00:26:01

Stein: This is Ellen's oldest brother?

04-00:26:04

Newman: Yes. He happens to be ill with cancer at the moment. And his younger brother I was like a father to, Jerry.

04-00:26:13

Stein: How old was he when you got married?

04-00:26:20

Newman: Twelve. Something like that. He is the youngest. And so they welcomed me into the family. They were glad to have me. And my mother and dad loved Cyril and my mother doted on Ellen. She just adored Ellen. My mom said, "If you guys ever get a divorce, you know who's coming home to me. It's Ellen." And my dad loved her, too. It was a very happy arrangement.

04-00:27:02

Stein: So when you started working for Joseph Magnin, it sounds like just after you were married? When you came back? Is that right?

04-00:27:06

Newman: Yes.

04-00:27:08

Stein: What was your position and how did you go about learning the trade?

04-00:27:12

Newman: Well, I didn't get into the merchandising. There were a lot of different responsibilities that had to be taken care of. One of them I'm not exactly sure about the timing but credit was a very important part of the business. And in those days you had a credit card from almost every store. There were no Visas and no MasterCards at that time. So everybody carried a lot of different credit cards. But the whole credit world was changing and stores were making plans available to customers where they could pay as little as maybe five percent a month and then the balance would be carried and you would charge interest on the balance. Well, that was something that the stores had to accommodate and so Cyril said, "Would you set that up for us." So I made some trips east and saw what other stores were doing and came back and set up the whole credit department in what they called revolving credit. And it turned out to be extremely profitable for the company. So I got involved in the credit department to some extent.

I got involved a lot in personnel and then I got involved in some of the real estate activities of the company. And one of the decisions that was made was to build a store in the western part of San Francisco called Stonestown. And that was really a major decision because the main store was down on O'Farrell and Stockton and they didn't know how much business opening another store in the city would take away from the main store. But the shopping center was just coming into its own at that time and it was very important that we have a position in this new area of retailing. So we picked out a prominent corner in Stonestown and we made a wonderful real estate deal. And Cyril said, "Will you go and manage it? Will you build the store and manage it and run it?" And I said, "Cyril, whatever you want me to do, I'll do." Well, his son Don was running the store in Sacramento at the time. I said, "Well, let's go ahead." We got Welton Becket architects to design it. We opened the store in '52, something like that. And we staffed it and it was a

huge success. And it really helped make Stonestown a fashion stop. It was the best store in the center. And our goal was to do a million dollars a year and I think we did it the second year or something like that. And we had a wonderful staff and had a good time out there.

04-00:31:16

Stein: What was Stonestown like as a community? Was it growing rapidly?

04-00:31:21

Newman: The city was growing out to the west and there was a lot of new development out there. Of course, parking was free. The Emporium was there. A lot of other good stores were there. So it became successful very quickly. But Joseph Magnin was one of the anchor stores. The Emporium was at one end and Joseph Magnin was at the other end. The Stonestown people were very pleased with us. It was a success. And it really kind of led to developing other stores rather quickly. We could see that this whole shopping center trend was catching on and we'd better get with it. So Cyril asked me to come back downtown to help build the company and we got into expanding the company rather rapidly. So that's another story.

04-00:32:24

Stein: Maybe we can take like a half step back here. I'm curious. When you arrived at the company, could you describe what it was like? What its reputation was in the community, what were they known for, and then maybe a little bit after that we can do some of the history behind that.

04-00:32:40

Newman: Sure. Well, Joseph Magnin Company was considered the young businesswoman's fashion store. Cyril always wanted it to be first and to be unique and not to be copied. There was I. Magnin, which a lot of people mistook for being Joseph Magnin, which was much more sedate, much more refined. I used to call it marble Magnin because it was that big marble store. JM was fast, it was young, it was fun. And young people loved to come there because there was always action. There was something going on. Cyril was a man of action and he believed in youth. And he looked at the cross section of people that worked there. Many of the merchandise people were all eighteen, twenty year old kids. But they were smart. And Cyril used to say, "Make big mistakes, because when you make big mistakes, you make a big winning." But only make the mistake once.

Just a little aside. Now, it was 1950. It's over fifty years ago and we had a reunion just a week ago. And we thought maybe twenty or thirty people would come to the reunion. There were 130 people that came, because people loved working at JM. It was fun. And it was a family company but they were part of the family. And regardless of where you were, later, after that, you'll never forget that JM was in your blood. You would have loved working there. I remember kids would all come there and work during the holidays. They'd

spend all their money on sweaters and skirts. It was the store for young people and the JM label meant a lot. People were proud of it.

04-00:35:11

Stein: I spoke to Ila Adams a couple of weeks ago—

04-00:35:14

Newman: Oh, yes. Isn't she great?

04-00:35:16

Stein: She was wonderful. And one of the really interesting things that she said was that JM was about youth. It was about young people. But she said that youth meant a slightly different thing than the way that we think of youth fashion today. That it was a slightly different age group or a slightly different customer segment. Does that ring true to you? That it wasn't high school students necessarily.

04-00:35:43

Newman: Well, it wasn't high school students. But the women were going into the workplace at that time. It was popularly priced. People could afford to buy there. You would have bought all your clothes there because you knew it was new, it wasn't expensive and you knew it was right. It was the new fashion. We were buying all of our merchandise and having it flown in from New York, the manufacturer, to beat the competition. And we'd have it in the windows. The advertising that Joseph Magnin did was some of the greatest retail advertising ever. It's in the Smithsonian now.

04-00:36:37

Stein: That's Betty Brader, right? The illustrator?

04-00:36:40

Newman: Well, Betty was the artist but Marget Larson was the art director and Toni Harley was the advertising director. It was a great team. But in answer to your question, it wasn't the high school teenager. It was a college person, young businesswomen, young married person. You could buy very nice clothes there for twenty dollars. Nineteen ninety-five was the price point. Twenty-nine ninety-five. And to know it was good. And we had a great group of sales people. The staff was very sharp. Cyril ran a very, very good clean operation. One of the things I always remember is the fact that anytime you heard a customer complaint on anything, whether it was how clean the restrooms were or they didn't like the carpet or something, or a garment, you had to write a complaint and it went to his desk and he called every single one of those people himself, because he said, "We spend thousands on advertising and you lose them so easily if you don't take care of their complaint." And he'd send them a bottle of perfume or something and they would love it. So it became your store. You would go to JM first.

I look at the competition. There was I. Magnin, there was Roos Atkins, Livingston, Liebes, Saks Fifth Avenue, but none of them stood for what JM stood for. JM was where the action was.

04-00:38:56

Stein: Okay. I think it would be great to talk a little bit about some of the history of the Magnin retail empire, both I. Magnin and Joseph Magnin. I realize that this is probably things that you've heard second and third hand.

04-00:39:12

Newman: Oh, sure.

04-00:39:13

Stein: But I think some of these stories of the founding are a great part of San Francisco history.

04-00:39:17

Newman: Yes, great.

04-00:39:19

Stein: So if you want to maybe tell us what you know about the founding of I. Magnin and then where JM came from in that.

04-00:39:25

Newman: Sure. Well, Mrs. I. Magnin started a children's shop down on Grant Avenue just before the earthquake in '06 and she imported the finest European children's ware and became the place to shop for children's things. And then the earthquake came along and their building was destroyed. She opened the store out in their home on Masonic Avenue. She had a large family, of which Joseph was one. After the earthquake, the city was rebuilt. And they built a store down on Grant Avenue that became I. Magnin and Company.

Now, Mrs. I. Magnin was the moving factor. Her husband was a guildmaster of frames at Gumps. Was never involved in the retail business at all. But the sons and the daughters all came into the business. I don't remember exactly what the date is. But then they decided that they would build a major store up on the corner of Geary and Stockton. The I. Magnin store now. The two brothers who sort of surfaced as the movers in the family, the shakers, were Grover Magnin, who ran I. Magnin's here, and John Magnin, who ran their office in New York. Joseph was overlooked. And Joseph's wife, Charlotte, was the women's millinery buyer at I. Magnin. So Joseph decided he was going to leave the company. He bought an interest in a company called Newman-Levinson. No relation. He bought Mr. Levinson's partnership and it became Newman and Magnin. We saw the sign up on the old buildings, the Newman and Magnin. Wow, it's not me. [laughter] Anyway, then he bought out the Newman interest and called the company Joseph Magnin.

Well, Joseph was a financial man and even until the day he died he had his own factoring business where he factored the invoices for manufacturers. But his wife, Charlotte, left I. Magnin when he left and helped him establish Joseph Magnin Company, because it became really a women's millinery. That was one of their principle departments. Anyway, Cyril came on the scene and took over the business. And Joseph let Cyril run the company. Joseph handled the financial end of it. But Cyril was at least nominally in charge of the business and it was sort of chugging along. I don't think it was doing very much. It was on the corner of Stockton and O'Farrell. They leased the property. And Cyril went back to New York to buy some buttons from a company called Gershel. It was very hard for Joseph Magnin to compete with I. Magnin. I. Magnin was THE store of San Francisco. And in those days, they could put pressure on a vendor not to sell Joseph Magnin if he wanted to sell I. Magnin. So Cyril had to scrounge around and find other lines that I. Magnin wouldn't allow him to have. So he went to this company called Gershel and he met a woman who was their chief designer. And I think he established a relationship. I don't know exactly how the timing was. She later became Mrs. Magnin. Her sister was Adele Simpson. They were going to Europe on a buying trip and Cyril went on the boat with them and he sort of took care of them and got them to good staterooms and everything. Then I guess he proposed to Anna and she left the Gershel Company and came to San Francisco. And she became the fashion leader of Joseph Magnin Company and really upgraded it into a fashion power.

So as Ellen has said in speeches, the Magnin hierarchy, I guess you might call it, or the Magnin line, was really a female line. It started with Mary Ann Magnin to Charlotte Magnin to Anna Magnin to Ellen Magnin. So that's kind of an interesting aside.

So Anna was a terrific person. I didn't know her. Ellen said she would have loved me because I like to gamble a little bit and she was a great card player. But Ellen and Anna were very, very close. She was the fashion leader of the company and kept the family going. And then Cyril was very active in the Democratic party and he, on this particular occasion—I guess it was in 1949, '48, maybe—he was going to the Democratic National Convention as a delegate. And while he was gone, Anna had this massive heart attack in Ellen's arms and died. And so then Ellen picked up from her mom and went on from there.

04-00:47:04

Stein:

Okay. And that's about the time that you—

04-00:47:08

Newman:

That's when I started to meet her, yes.

04-00:47:10

Stein: Soon after you joined the company. I'm curious. It sounds like, certainly from Cyril Magnin's biography, that he made a big business decision to shift the demographic of Joseph Magnin, that he no longer wanted to compete with I. Magnin. He wanted to go after a different customer, a younger customer. I'm curious both if you have any sense of why or whether the competition with I. Magnin, did that continue into the years that you worked with them and how that relationship worked.

04-00:47:50

Newman: Well, I. Magnin covered a broad range, from the very most expensive down into the sportswear categories and other more useful merchandise. But I think Cyril had a vision of competing where he could compete. I. Magnin had most of the really top flight lines. Times were changing. Cyril read a lot. He was very, very aware of what was going on. He loved to talk to people and he had a great feeling. I think he probably saw this swing toward youth and women getting active in business and being recognized, women's rights were becoming more important, and he saw that there was a niche there that I. Magnin wasn't doing very well at that he was going to step into. And he saw that it was the right thing to do and he put his chips on it and it worked out. But Cyril was a very democratic man. He had no restrictions on anything. You could be black or yellow or brown. It didn't make a bit of difference as long as you were good. And he saw good in people. He'd spot it and he'd say, "Okay, you're going to do it." And sometimes we thought he was nuts, but boy, he picked the right people. I was saying at the reunion the other day that, remember, the Japanese people were put in—

04-00:49:59

Stein: Internment camps.

04-00:50:00

Newman: —internment camps. When the war was over, Cyril was the first one to hire Japanese because not only did he feel that it was the right thing to do, but they were smart. And he didn't have any hesitation about having Japanese work there. And I was just so pleased at this reunion that I think maybe a quarter of the people there were Chinese. Because the Chinese used to be persecuted in San Francisco. And Cyril gave them jobs. Good jobs. Important jobs. And I think they appreciated the fact that he had done this thing. Not that it was so unusual. But that was their company. And the people were really what made that company. He loved to have people charge out and do something very unique.

04-00:51:05

Meeker: May I ask a question?

04-00:51:06

Stein: Yes, certainly.

04-00:51:07

Meeker: So it's interesting. Julie and I have both picked up on this notion of Cyril Magnin switching the company toward a more youthful orientation. After he kind of takes over in '37 but certainly more so in the forties and fifties. And we've heard people talk about it in the pre-interviews and we've read it in his autobiography. And I sort of feel like we both interpreted, Julie and I both interpreted it in a sense of, well, that means he was going towards the youth demographic market, right? That means that he was wanting to sell to teenagers and twenty some-things. But I'm actually hearing more that you're talking about youth kind of in a metaphorical sense. Like not young people or youth as a mindset but more like young America.

04-00:52:04

Newman: Exactly.

04-00:52:05

Meeker: It's like after World War II and America is sort of starting over again and, again, it's a new attitude toward life style, toward accepting the different kinds of people. Is that what youth meant?

04-00:52:26

Newman: Perfect. A wonderful description. Perfect. And he saw California growing again. This was the new land. There was energy here and he wanted to get on the bandwagon.

04-00:52:43

Meeker: Yes. So there's a regional thing, as well.

04-00:52:45

Newman: Yes.

04-00:52:46

Meeker: It's no accident that this sort of attention toward youthfulness comes from the west, where that was America's youth, that was America's future.

04-00:52:55

Newman: True, true. And I've always said there are two Americas. There's the two coasts and then there's the central part of America. And Cyril, he was a liberal and he saw things. People wanted to do things. They wanted to be active and they wanted fun and they wanted creativity. Let's get with it.

04-00:53:22

Meeker: And so, in a sense, I. Magnin and other more established retailers in San Francisco were sort of, if you will, an outpost of New York City or Boston in California. Is that a little bit how it was thought about?

04-00:53:38

Newman:

Well, they were much more conservative in their approach to merchandising. I remember Ellen going back to New York. I think the color was orange. Some kind of a vivid orange. She saw this color and she said, "Oh, man," and she flew it out here and all of a sudden all the windows were orange and people couldn't wait to get into that orange. It was a lot of fun. I don't know. There was always some activity, something new going on in every department. And then the advertising got people feeling this new kind of a trend of merchandising. And then, of course, one of the biggest things that we did, and I was very deeply involved in it, was the creation of these very unique boxes, gift boxes. I don't know if you've seen them, but she has them in her office. The usual box for merchandise was just the standard hard box. But Marget Larson, who was the art director, came up with the idea of creating folding boxes that were unique for each season. And for every Christmas season, for example, one year it would be cakes. The next year it might be toys. The next year it might be totally different. But each sized box had very unique designs of that particular type of fun thing. And these things were so colorful and so unique in their shapes that people would come and buy the merchandise just to have the boxes. When Marget came up with this idea and she came to me and she said, "Well, Walter, we want to do this," I said, "Gee, all those different colors and all those shapes and everything, it's going to be so expensive for us to do this." Well, we did it and went out to bid and we found we cut the cost of our regular boxes by half. So we really put the pressure to do that, because they were much thinner and didn't use as much cardboard. And the cardboard people were just overwhelmed with this stuff. So now the Los Angeles County Museum is having a big exhibition on art of the fifties and sixties and they want all those boxes. They're going into the exhibition. So that's just another idea. The sky's the limit. Try it. If it's new, let's try it.

04-00:56:56

Meeker:

I just have one question. And you might have already answered this by saying that Cyril was an avid reader. But you said that it had become evident that shopping centers were the sort of wave of the future so you decided to go in and become an anchor store at Stonestown. How was it that you and Cyril were able to predict that shopping centers were the wave of the future? This was something quite new. There were just a few of them around the country at this point in time. It was a risk.

04-00:57:31

Newman:

Again, California was on the growth and almost every city had regional centers going into them. And these developers needed good tenants. So the next thing I knew they were all on my doorstep. And I'll tell you, you may think I look like a sweet baby face, but I had the reputation of being the toughest tenant in the business because they needed us. We were the right image for all of these shopping centers, whether it was in Los Angeles or in Sacramento or in Reno. This whole movement of youth and excitement and fun was everywhere and they needed us because nobody else was doing it.

And so they said, “Well, what do you want to come put a store in?” I’ll never forget. The best deal I ever made [laughter] was in Costa Mesa. They wanted us so badly they built the store. You know who Frank Gehry is? Well, Frank Gehry was in the architectural office building the store. We didn’t have much of a budget for interior stuff. But the owner of the center gave us absolutely everything, right down to the clothes hangers, and I got him to throw in a station wagon so we could use it for delivery and we paid no guaranteed rent. It was all percentage. In other words, if you didn’t do any business, they didn’t get any rent. But they knew that Joseph Magnin was a creator of business for them and so they were willing to do virtually a handstand to get us to come in.

Interview #3: June 24, 2010

Begin Audio File 5 06-24-2010.mp3

05-00:00:00

Stein: This is Julie Stein and I'm here with Walter Newman. It's June 24, 2010 and this is our third interview. So welcome and thank you again.

05-00:00:14

Newman: Thank you. I'm enjoying it.

05-00:00:16

Stein: This is tape five. Okay, so last session we started talking about the Joseph Magnin Company and you told us a little bit about joining and some of the early years. What we'd like to talk about today is some of the expansion of the company that you were so closely involved in.

05-00:00:38

Newman: Sure.

05-00:00:40

Stein: And before we get into the actual stores and the specifics of expansion, if you could talk a little bit about some of the vision, where you and Cyril envisioned this company going. Did you plan to make a national company? Was there a long-range plan or was it more sort of a one-off expansion plan when you found good locations?

05-00:01:10

Newman: The plan for the company was to expand in the West primarily. We were relatively small in size and small in capital. So it really wasn't possible for us to do a national expansion. We just didn't have the capital for it. But we felt that expanding in California and Nevada would be easy to do, and because we were so well-known in this part of the country, that we could have stores built for us without having to expend very much capital. So it was generally a western expansion program. Although I have to say that Donald felt that we should consider expanding eastward with large stores, into Chicago and New York, for example, rather than having as many stores as we visualized in the West. But the great advantage of having stores in the West was that the advertising could be covered with local newspapers. For example, the Bay Area newspapers would cover perhaps everything from San Jose to Santa Rosa and even eastward a little bit. The same thing would be true, let's say, of Southern California. The Los Angeles newspapers would cover most of the Southern California area, so your advertising costs would be kept much lower. And furthermore, the name Magnin, Joseph Magnin, was well-recognized in

the West and it didn't have to be established in the eastern United States. So that was our program.

05-00:03:47

Stein: I'm not sure if it's hard to distinguish what was the plan when you arrived, what Cyril's vision was versus what you personally contributed. Is that something that you can—

05-00:04:00

Newman: I think so, yes. As I've mentioned before, Cyril was a visionary and he saw the potential for the company. Early on we had had stores in Nevada, one in Reno and one in Palo Alto and then another store was opened in Sacramento and Don Magnin went up to manage that and then we opened in Stonestown, where I went to manage, and we saw how successful these, I call them branch stores, were and how much they contributed to the profit of the company that we decided to really go on a broad expansion program. When we made that decision, we went all out. And I remember in a year, I think it was 1955, we opened five stores.

05-00:05:18

Stein: Wow. Do you remember where those stores were? Were those still local California stores?

05-00:05:28

Newman: Las Vegas, Modesto, Santa Rosa and a couple in Southern California.

05-00:05:35

Stein: So maybe this is a good time to actually get you to tell us a little bit about the step by step process that it takes to open a store.

05-00:05:46

Newman: Certainly. Well, we know a lot about California. We lived here. And we know a good deal about the expansion. It was generally our policy to open in major shopping centers, regional shopping centers, because parking was accessible and free and other stores would create traffic. But Joseph Magnin had an aura about it that the customers didn't find in most other retail fashion stores. And as a result, Joseph Magnin was an extremely desirable company to have as an anchor tenant. And so as these shopping centers developed around California as it grew, as California was growing, almost every one of them approached us about locating in their center. So it was really a matter of choosing, picking and choosing, the ones that were the best and then finding an attractive deal for us that could result in profit for the company. So we had a lot of them come over the desk and we tried to pick the very best ones that we could.

05-00:07:31

Stein: So it sounds like there was a pretty wide range of stores by, let's say, the mid-1960s. So you have the downtown flagship, you have a lot of these more

suburban shopping center stores, and then stores in Nevada, stores in California. If we were to get a sense of sort of the wide range of stores in the fleet, could you describe maybe what a typical new store would be like in terms of square footage or what shopping centers and then maybe give us an example of the process of opening that location.

05-00:08:06

Newman:

Certainly. Most of the stores would run from about 15,000 to 30,000 feet. And we carried all departments in each one of the stores. Although the men's wear departments only went into the larger stores. Most of the smaller stores were strictly women. And children's went into almost all of the larger stores. The process was really pretty cookie cutter. After a while, we knew how to do it. But, again, the company was visionary. We could have just duplicated each store. But rather than doing that, we got creative architects and creative designers to do what we felt were exciting things in each store so that there was always something new going on. It was fun working with some of these very creative people with new ideas that would produce a little different store each time.

So particularly with the larger stores, there was one architectural firm that we really enjoyed working with and that was Victor Gruen and Associates, a very prominent Southern California architectural firm. Rudy Baumfeld was their chief designer and he got to know the Joseph Magnin requirements readily and did some beautiful stores for us. So wherever you went, you would find some difference in the Joseph Magnin appearance. The merchandise was not always the same because different areas had different requirements, different tastes. So each store manager had access to the buyers and would tell them what they felt they needed, what they were getting that they didn't need, and so each store manager, to a sense, was a merchandise person. Merchandise manager.

05-00:11:02

Stein:

So this was your role at Stonestown, correct?

05-00:11:04

Newman:

Yes.

05-00:11:05

Stein:

Was it a difficult transition? What were some of the challenges or things that you learned going from this very sort of business side to being really the merchandise manager for Stonestown?

05-00:11:17

Newman:

Well, Stonestown, of course, was a metropolitan center and we were catering to virtually the San Francisco women, the downtown was. So the merchandise was virtually the same. I had some wonderful department managers who knew what their customers' tastes were and so we were able to structure our

merchandise pretty much to the taste of the area. Being in the western part of San Francisco, we didn't have the demand for the very high priced merchandise that you might find in the downtown store. Our thrust was strongly in the sportswear area and moderately priced clothing, dresses, coats and suits. People loved the store. It was a beautifully designed store by Welton Becket and Associates. And Stonestown was really the first regional center in the San Francisco area. So we were busy from day one. We were very, very pleased with the business as it started. It was successful right up until the very end.

05-00:12:57

Stein: You talked a little bit about the successes and getting the clothing in the door. Did you have a particular markdown strategy or a sales strategy or was that—

05-00:13:11

Newman: Well, Mr. Magnin, Cyril, always had a feeling for merchandise, that it had to be absolutely fresh and new and if things didn't sell he didn't believe in hanging on. He used to have the feeling that apparel was like vegetables or fruit. It didn't get any better by sitting around. We watched it very carefully every day. The buyers would get a record of what had sold that day and if merchandise didn't move it was marked down very quickly and other things that would move were brought in. A particular case in point. The formation of a department called "Magna Rama" and that was on the top floor of the downtown store. And when merchandise wasn't moving, for whatever reason, it was marked down and put up in the "Magna Rama" department. So that was really sort of the bargain department and women who were shopping for price would go up there and find good value. Mr. Magnin always believed that the first markdown should be a big one, that the merchandise bite should be a big one. Don't fool around by cutting it ten percent or twenty percent. Cut it a third or a half and move it so that you have new things coming in that people would want to buy.

05-00:15:13

Stein: I know from my retail experience that we were always worried that marking things down might damage the brand image. And so one of the things that we did was have seasonal sales that were big events, that we would try to have four times maybe, get all the old stuff out, get all the new stuff in. Was that a strategy that you used at Joseph Magnin, as well?

05-00:15:33

Newman: It was, but I think it was a little different. There were markdowns being taken all the time. There would be a large sale day periodically but there was always a markdown rack on the floor so that people knew that they could do some bargain shopping all the time.

05-00:16:01

Stein: Are there particular items that you remember either being runaway successes or complete dogs?

05-00:16:08

Newman: Well, I think Joseph Magnin developed wonderful relationships with certain designers. Eleanor Green was a local manufacturer who designed things that were very appealing to Joseph Magnin women. There was another local firm by the name of Lilli Ann that was owned by Adolph Schuman. And Lilli Ann had rather striking clothes that were maybe a little gauche, but people liked them and we did a big business with Lilli Ann. We had a lot of wonderful vendors and I can't remember all of the names of the best vendors but the relationships that Joseph Magnin had were very solid. And the buyers were always looking for new vendors, too. They would shop the regular vendors but always looking for new ideas.

05-00:17:33

Stein: You mentioned two local designers. Did Joseph Magnin try to cultivate local talent? I imagine that might be one way that you could differentiate yourself from some of the department stores on the East Coast. Or was it more of a national or even international vendor base?

05-00:17:52

Newman: We had a New York buying office and I would say probably two-thirds of the business that was done was done in New York. The buyers and the merchandise people did travel to Europe periodically, but the foreign merchandise wasn't as important as American. So I would say about a third came from local vendors and two-thirds from the Eastern.

05-00:18:25

Stein: So at what point did you transition from being the manager of the Stonestown store to taking more of sort of a general role in expansion and the new stores?

05-00:18:39

Newman: Well, I think I was at Stonestown for a couple of years and then was able to train a person to take over. Mr. Magnin said, "I'd really like to have you come back down. We're growing." And both Donald, who had been in Sacramento, and I were called back to San Francisco. He became the general merchandise manager for the company and I was vice-president, primarily interested in administration of the company and the growth and the real estate that was involved. I, to a large extent, worked with the personnel people, with the credit department, the financial people, and all of the non-selling departments. So as the opportunities started to present themselves, as the State was growing with shopping centers all over, we dived in with both feet and started a real expansion program.

05-00:20:07

Stein: It sounds like, to some extent, a lot of these expansion opportunities were just landing on your desk, that shopping malls, as they were building, they would look for an anchor like Joseph Magnin—

05-00:20:19

Newman: Exactly.

05-00:20:20

Stein: —that they knew would draw business. Do you have a sense of how much of your new business you had to go out and actively recruit versus how much came to you?

05-00:20:30

Newman: Well, it was kind of a mixed bag. Some came to us and some we went out and fostered. One in particular was in Oakland. There was a company by the name of Lindberg's and we heard that Lindberg's wanted to divest themselves of their company. We ended up buying the Lindberg Company. For a while it was Lindberg Joseph Magnin and then the name Lindberg was sublimated and it became the Joseph Magnin Store. But that was a very successful store in the Kaiser Center. We expanded in the East Bay around that acquisition.

Then there were other things. For example, we knew the Lake Tahoe situation. We had had a summer store at Cal Neva, which was a unique situation. Lake Tahoe is a very attractive vacation spot and a lot of the people from the Bay Area go up there. But it's a summer type of operation. So Cyril and others came up with the idea of having just a summer store, like a circus tent. And we created all of the fixtures on wheels and the whole store was collapsed at the end of the season at Labor Day and dismantled and taken down. And it was reestablished the following year around May Day and went through the whole summer. It was very successful. So we knew that the Lake Tahoe business was significant and so we looked for an opportunity on the south shore of Lake Tahoe. There was a shopping store developed there and we put a beautiful store on the south side of Lake Tahoe. So we had that area covered.

And then the Las Vegas situation was a very special one and that's almost a story in itself, because Cyril had had some information years ago, because we had a store in Reno and he was on the train going to New York. One of the people from Nevada said, "The coming city is going to be Las Vegas." So Cyril asked me if I would go down and see if we could put together a really major presentation or major store in Las Vegas. And a connection was made with the Desert Inn Hotel, which had a piece of adjoining property right on the strip. I was asked to go down and put that deal together.

05-00:24:20

Stein: Now, the Desert Inn at this point was the hotel in Vegas?

05-00:24:25

Newman: It was certainly one of the top ones. There were several. The Flamingo. The Sands, yes. Sands was a big one. But the Desert Inn was sort of the old established place where a lot of the high rollers went. Wilbert Clark was sort of the front man for the Desert Inn. But it was run by a man by the name of Moe Dalitz. Moe had a background of being the head of the Purple Gang in Detroit.

05-00:25:03

Stein: These are Jewish mobsters, correct?

05-00:25:07

Newman: He was. There were many of them down there. But Mo and I hit it off and we really became very, very close friends. He wanted to make a deal for a store there and we got the Victor Gruen people to design it. It was the largest store in the state of Nevada and it was a beautiful store. They really had nothing like that in Las Vegas. And these were in the early days of Las Vegas and, of course, there was so much excitement that is presented whenever anything happened in Las Vegas. When that store opened we wanted to have something that would cause a lot of attention to this new store opening. It really was Ellen's idea. She said, "Let's open the store at midnight." We brought planeloads of the leading designers from the east to Las Vegas and we had a big slot machine at the foot of the stairs at the airplane. When they got off, they were each given a handful of dollars. Every major name in the fashion industry came out for that opening. We had raffles for thousand dollar wardrobes at midnight. It was so full of people at midnight at the opening it blocked all the traffic on the Strip. It was one of the biggest openings that they ever had for anything.

05-00:27:06

Stein: In Vegas. Can you tell me more about working with a famous mobster? It sounds like you come from a business background that stresses integrity. What was it like working with Moe Dalitz?

05-00:27:24

Newman: Well, when you're dealing with those people, your word is your bond. We shook hands on a deal. That was all I ever had to think about. He knew what our requirements were. He said, "That's it." We shook hands and then the lawyers drew up the papers. But there was never any thought of cutting any corners with them or with us. They're people of great integrity when it came to doing business.

But the fun thing, and I've told this story so many times. When we were looking for sites in Las Vegas and Moe Dalitz said, "Well, come on, Walter. Bring Ellen down and we'll show you the town. You like to play golf. Bring your clubs. We'll arrange it." When we arrived, they got a car for us and showed us all over the city. His site was, just without question, the very best

for us. And I think he took us to dinner and he said, "Now, we're going to have a golf game tomorrow. Be out at the tee at nine o'clock." Well, I went out there at eight o'clock to practice because I was playing with the boss. Well, at that time I was not making very much money. My salary was very low. Joseph Magnin always kept salaries low because we wanted the stockholders to get the benefit of the value of the company. Anyway, when I got out to the first tee, there were two owners of other hotels that were going to make up the foursome. Moe Dalitz came out and he introduced me to these men. And he said, "Now, we're going to have a game." The usual game that I played was Nassau, which is you place a bet on the first nine, a bet on the second nine and then one bet on the whole eighteen wholes. And my best was a dollar, a dollar, a dollar. So I said to Moe, "What do we play for?" And he said, "Well, we play Nassau for two?" I said, "Is that two dollars?" "No, that's two hundred. Two hundred a side plus two hundred for the whole eighteen. And then we play fifty dollars. If you're down by two strokes you play another fifty dollar bet." Well, I thought to myself, "I could lose a thousand dollars playing this game." "Well, this is the moment of truth," and I said, "Moe, you know, I don't want to play for that much. I don't want to lose that much and I don't want to win that much." And he said, "Well, that's okay, Walter. How much would you play for?" [laughter] I wished I could play for a dollar. But I thought, "Well, I'll play for fifty dollars a side." He said, "Okay, I'll pick up the difference." I thought what have I got myself into. Anyway, to make a long story short, I shot thirty-eight on the backside and all the bets were on. He must have made several thousand dollars. But he said to me, "Walter, I found out what kind of a guy you are on that first tee, because you're no nonsense and you're no phony." We became friends thereafter and had some wonderful experiences together. We really became very, very good friends. He invited Ellen and me to come to Las Vegas almost every New Year's. It was a scene. The mobsters from all over the country were there and here are Ellen and I and our mouths were open. But we were just nice people and Moe liked us so much.

And then I had an experience. Avril was his wife. Lovely young woman. And her mother had cancer. So she was going to be treated at UCSF and we said, "Come on up, Avril, stay with us in San Francisco while your mom's having these treatments." So she did and it happened to be my birthday. Moe came up on my birthday. We were having a cocktail party here. He walked in and he had a big package. I'm going on too long about this. It's just an anecdote. But he said, "This is a new set of golf clubs for you." Well, when I opened it, it was a rifle with a beautiful telescopic sight on it. I said, "Moe, this is unbelievable," but I said, "where am I going to use this thing?" He reached into his pocket and he pulled out two tickets. He said, "You and I are going elk hunting tomorrow." He said, "I've cleared it all with Cyril and we're going."

05-00:32:59

Stein:

Oh, wow.

05-00:32:59

Newman: “We’re going elk hunting.” It was a scene in itself. We’re flying on the plane and I said, “Moe,” I said, “I don’t have a license to go elk hunting.” “Don’t worry. The game warden’s our guide.”

05-00:33:17

Stein: So you had the real inside scoop it sounds like.

05-00:33:20

Newman: Well, it was. It was quite a scene. But my relationship with Moe was very special and the business was very significant. It was extremely successful store. And we were very happy that we did that.

05-00:33:44

Stein: Were there other stores in Las Vegas at the time? Were there other of your competitors?

05-00:33:48

Newman: None.

05-00:33:50

Stein: So you were really sort of the path breakers?

05-00:33:51

Newman: We were it. Yes.

05-00:33:53

Stein: And do you think that that’s—

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Newman: But that was vision. That was Cyril’s vision, to get there early and establish yourself.

05-00:34:04

Stein: So let’s talk about how you go about finding these new markets. Some of the people that we talked to have characterized you as a meticulous researcher, as somebody who really looks at every aspect of a new location or a new deal.

05-00:34:20

Newman: We did. We had a research firm, if there was a question, we would ask them to come in and analyze the market for us. How many stores could we put into that market. And I’ll never forget the most difficult decision that we had to make was in Walnut Creek. We had a very good store in the Broadway Shopping Center. Well, then there was a regional center that was going to open in Concord and that was really going to impinge on the Walnut Creek market. So the question was should we open a big store in Concord? Should we close the Walnut Creek store? Or should we expand in Walnut Creek and

not go into Concord? The decision from the research was Walnut Creek was your market and Sears had vacated the store it operated in Broadway and we took the Sears store over, which was much, much larger than the store we had. We established ourselves as the fashion store in that whole area, rather than trying to divide the business with Concord. And I think Sun Valley was successful but it never had a fashion image to it. And the decision was the right one.

05-00:36:01

Stein: Were there other store closures that you remember? It sounds like so many of the stores were wildly successful at this time.

05-00:36:09

Newman: We had one close in the suburb of Sacramento. We changed locations when a new center opened. We closed that store. But by and large, the decisions that we made were sound and they were profitable. If we couldn't make a lease that was profitable, we would not go into the center, regardless of how good it was. I kind of laugh because there was one group of centers, I won't mention the name. They were good centers, but try as we could, we could never make a deal that was profitable for us. The leases were always profitable for the developer but not for the tenant. As a result, I would never put a store in any of those centers. When we sold the company, the first thing the new owners did was to put stores in all of those centers and it was a waste of time and money because they could never make anything in those centers.

05-00:37:35

Stein: What types of research do you remember doing? When you were considering a new location, were you looking into the growth of the community? The competitors, the demographics?

05-00:37:51

Newman: Yes. All of the above. We had a lot of local knowledge. We'd been around here for a long time and we knew where the good areas were and the ones that were not so good and we also knew the developers. And then when Jerry went to Southern California, Jerry is a very smart man, and we started with a store in Century City, which was really the first major metropolitan center in Southern California. That store was very successful. And Jerry went down there to run it and to take over the Southern Division. He had a lot of vision. He knew locations and where we should and shouldn't be. And so we depended a lot on Jerry's advice rather than getting professionals in there.

05-00:38:54

Stein: For the Southern California expansion?

05-00:38:56

Newman: Yes.

05-00:38:57

Stein: You talk about the Las Vegas opening as sort of out of this world.

05-00:39:05

Newman: It was.

05-00:39:06

Stein: Did you have big openings for other stores, just on a smaller scale?

05-00:39:07

Newman: We didn't in Century City. The center was such a big center that you couldn't really make an impact in Century City, so we did a lot of advertising. And the store was very, very successful from the get-go. Then when that became the focal point of Southern California, then we expanded around it. I think we must have had eight or ten stores in Southern California. I mentioned earlier the advertising impact of the metropolitan daily. If you ran an ad in *The L.A. Times*, it would cover all of the Southern California area, just as *The Chronicle* would cover everything from, say, San Jose up to Santa Rosa and East Oakland and Berkeley and Walnut Creek. So the advertising of Joseph Magnin was so unique. It was the best in the whole United States. I don't say that just off-handedly. It was. And people loved to read the ads because the artwork was so beautiful. So having the coverage of the metropolitan daily was very important.

05-00:40:48

Stein: Were you in charge of the advertising budget? Was that something that fell under your—

05-00:40:55

Newman: No, that was something that Cyril worked out with the advertising director. There was a budget put together by the controller, Tony Nocita and Toni Harley was the advertising director for the company and she worked on that.

05-00:41:14

Stein: Okay. I'd love to talk a little bit about some of the Hawaii stores, too. When I spoke to Ila Adams on the phone she had some wonderful memories about opening—I believe she said three or four stores in Hawaii.

05-00:41:28

Newman: We did. We had three stores.

05-00:41:31

Stein: So can you first tell me why Hawaii? Did you see it as a growing vacation spot or as a community that had potential because of mainlanders or because of Hawaiians? What was the vision for those stores?

05-00:41:50

Newman: Well, we saw it as a new market. We felt that we had covered all of the western markets. There were no other cities locally that we felt we had missed and there was a market over there. We were able to make some very attractive leases and we felt that we had to open enough stores to make it worthwhile to have management over there. You had all the distances involved in shipping merchandise over. So we had a downtown store.

05-00:42:44

Stein: In Honolulu?

05-00:42:46

Newman: In Honolulu and a shopping center store and then a hotel store.

05-00:42:55

Stein: Did you open them all at the same time?

05-00:42:57

Newman: I think so.

05-00:43:00

Stein: Now, she said that she went out maybe two or three months in advance of the store openings to drum up support from the local chamber of commerce and to find people to staff the stores. Were you involved in that or was that mostly the personnel?

05-00:43:17

Newman: Well, the personnel department did that. I was kind of responsible for getting them online, getting it open, getting the merchandise out there, seeing that the store opened correctly.

05-00:43:32

Stein: So this sort of advance guard, going a couple of months in advance of the opening, was that something that you would do for every store or was that unique to Hawaii because it was such a—

05-00:43:43

Newman: No, we were there in advance getting the store ready because the store openings were key. When you opened the store, that gave the customer the flavor of what it was going to be, and so it had to be right. And so our whole staff would be there for several weeks before the opening and then we would all kind of descend there several days before the opening just to be sure that it was done properly. Shake hands with people and all of that.

05-00:44:20

Stein: Were the Hawaii stores successful?

05-00:44:22

Newman: Yes. Quite successful.

05-00:44:36

Meeker: Okay. So I'm going to ask a few follow-up questions now. Kind of back to the beginning, when Julie was asking you about sort of regional versus national expansion and you had mentioned that your brother-in-law Donald had a vision for more of a national expansion and I felt like you pretty clearly explained why it was that you decided to focus mostly on the western region. Do you recall what some of his arguments were for wanting to go national?

05-00:45:06

Newman: I think his thought was that these would be larger stores and you would be concentrating your effort on maybe three or four major stores rather than having twenty smaller stores, which would require a wider kind of supervision and wider kind of handling of the merchandise. Where you would concentrate your efforts in just three or four different stores. But the local expansion was easier and was much less costly, because really almost the entire cost was born by the developers here, other than the merchandise.

05-00:46:08

Meeker: So was his idea then to just kind of move Joseph Magnin in these other markets into competition with the larger department stores, like Emporium Capwell and Macy's and those sorts of things?

05-00:46:21

Newman: Would be more like competing with Saks Fifth Avenue market, Neiman Marcus and so forth. It's kind of an interesting aside. After we sold the company, we were approached by Carter Hawley Hale, Jerry and Donald and I. We had really one of the best management teams around. And Mr. Hawley of Carter Hawley Hale asked us to come to Los Angeles. He said, "I want you people to open a national chain like Joseph Magnin that will knock Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus out of the box. And I'll give you all the money you need to do it and you'll get all the help you need. We said, "Well, let us think about it." Donald said, "I don't want to work for anybody else." Jerry said, "I don't want to work for anybody else." But there was an opportunity to really do it. We could have but it would have taken ten years to do.

05-00:47:36

Meeker: So during this period of time after you marry Ellen and you become involved in the company, who rounded out the management team? Who were making these big decisions about are we going to go national, are we going to stay regional? What is the—

05-00:47:55

Newman: We had a board of directors. The board consisted of the family plus two outside directors. We had gone public through the efforts of James Felchin,

who was with an eastern brokerage company. They did some financing for us and he became a board member. And the other member was Harold Zellerbach. He was an old friend of Cyril's. Zellerbach Paper Company was his company. He was one of the most down to earth and super critics of what the company should do. He was very solid and added a lot to the deliberations of the board. But the board virtually made the major decisions of the direction of the company. But working at Joseph Magnin was very unique. We had such a great group of department heads. Typically think of people like Tony Nocita, who was the financial controller, Toni Harley, the advertising people. We have wonderful merchants under Donald's supervision, and everybody just worked together. It was a wonderful experience.

05-00:49:51

Meeker: Were you on the board of directors?

05-00:49:53

Newman: I was.

05-00:49:54

Meeker: Joseph Magnin being a family company—there were a few outside directors—it was a family company. I imagine that working within and managing a family company both has its special rewards and special challenges. You know the people you're working with and I imagine there's a well-established trust amongst siblings and parents and children and so forth. But there are sometimes obviously rivalries among siblings and so forth. I wonder when you're determining the direction of the company and so forth, how did the family dynamic play, especially because you weren't born into the family? You married into the family. I wonder if there were ever challenges associated with that?

05-00:50:56

Newman: Not as far as I know. Everybody trusted everybody else. We were all working from the same goals. We all enjoyed what we were doing. There was no backbiting at all. Each of us had different areas. We were family. The board really was not family because of Jim Felchin and Harold Zellerbach. Everybody was working for the welfare of the company and I don't think there was any acrimony or any unpleasantness that I ever experienced anywhere.

05-00:51:45

Meeker: So was it Cyril Magnin who basically made the decisions about assignments to Jerry and Donald and yourself about what aspects of the company? And to what extent were these assignments based on a series of conversations about what you were specifically interested in or was it more his vision about who he thought would do the best job in a particular—

05-00:52:11

Newman: I think that the latter is the case. Donald is a great merchant. He knew that business from the get-go. Jerry is a brilliant young man and, of course, Jerry was a good deal younger. When I came in, I didn't have the merchandising background that Donald did, but I'd had a lot of other experiences. And Cyril saw that in me and he used me in a lot of different assignments. I have a letter upstairs that Ellen found in her files the other day. Cyril wrote me a letter and he said, "Walter, I want to tell you how happy I am with the way you're running the company." He said, "I can go away knowing that things are really going to be taken care of properly for the first time."

05-00:53:17

Meeker: Interesting. We had talked a little bit about advertising and you had mentioned mostly print ads in regional newspapers, San Francisco, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*. Were there other advertising outlets that were explored? Radio? Television? Magazines?

05-00:53:41

Newman: Not to any large extent. Most of it was newspaper advertising.

05-00:53:46

Meeker: And also about expansion. You talked about covering the west, which started out in California, then a short time after, expansion into Reno and Vegas and Southern California, as well, and then eventually three stores in Hawaii. But the other part of the west. The west is sometimes defined a lot more broadly. So there's the Northwest, like Washington and Seattle and Portland, in essence. Was there ever any discussion about going into the Northwest?

05-00:54:18

Newman: There was. That's a very interesting question because we had looked at Portland and we looked at Seattle. I. Magnin was in both of those. Portland was not a particularly attractive city for us.

05-00:54:43

Meeker: I wonder why that is. It's certainly bigger and more cosmopolitan, if you will, than a place like Modesto would be.

05-00:54:50

Newman: It is. But at the time that we were operating it hadn't gotten any kind of an image of being a very cosmopolitan city. It was much more of an evergreen type of environment. Oregon just didn't hit us. Modesto was a different situation. That was a local thing. I happen to know it because Newman was down there. It was a great shopping center. There's a lot of money in the Valley. And we sent a wonderful young woman down there to run it by the name of Pat Montandon. Pat was born in Modesto and she just turned that town upside down. She was just great.

05-00:55:56

Meeker: And Seattle. Why was that rejected?

05-00:55:58

Newman: Well, we talked about a merger with Nordstrom's. We'd talked to Nordstrom's about doing some things together and it could have been a merger. We didn't know exactly what it was going to be. We could have gone into Seattle but we would have been competing directly with Nordstrom's. We had a couple of talks with them and then we just broke it off. They didn't particularly want to go forward and I guess we didn't either.

05-00:57:05

Meeker: And then you didn't want to compete head on once the talks broke down?

05-00:57:07

Newman: Yes.

05-00:57:08

Meeker: Interesting. So Modesto's an interesting example. Were you also in Fresno or Bakersfield or was it—

05-00:57:15

Newman: No. No, it wasn't. The Modesto situation was kind of unusual because I was able to put together a thing that worked out where the family could buy the store and own the store. The store building. And it was in a shopping center. But it actually worked out as an investment for them and it worked out well.

05-00:57:58

Meeker: Are there any other examples that you bought rather than leased the store?

05-00:58:04

Newman: In Santa Rosa we did.

05-00:58:08

Meeker: And what was the decision making process that would go into something like that?

05-00:58:11

Newman: Well, we liked the area and we saw it as a growth situation and the developer wanted to do something very, very attractive and so we did. It didn't affect the operation of the company at all. It just was a real estate transaction that worked out well for Cyril and the family. That instead of having the developer own the building, we were able to own the building.

05-00:58:48

Meeker: Were there other sort of external investments like that? Like real estate that the company—

05-00:58:54

Newman: Those were the only two.

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06-00:00:00

Meeker: I just have one other follow-up question. You had described your engagement with architectural firms. It sounds like when you were having the stores kind of built as single entities, right, so there was architecture but there was also the interior architecture, as well, for the stores and the malls and so forth. What were some of the unique aspects of the design that went into the stores? Were there sort of some hallmark or trademark parts of a Joseph Magnin store, that even if you didn't see the sign on the store you might know that you were in one once you entered into it?

06-00:00:51

Newman: Well, I think one of the unique things about the JM stores was the very vivid use of color. You would feel a feeling of youth when you came in there. There were very bright colors all the way throughout. And the departments were virtually the same. First the accessories were usually at the front door. The cosmetics were right inside the front door. And then the sportswear department was usually very vivid in color and the fine apparel, the better apparel, was in a much subdued type of design. But each architect was given quite a bit of latitude. And then we had some interior people. Incidentally, one of them was Frank Gehry, who did the Costa Mesas store. One of the people that Victor Gruen's office, who we've used extensively, was Gere Cavanaugh. Gere designed probably five or six stores for us. And one of the stores that she did that was so unique—I think it was the first small store in the financial district. It was down on Montgomery Street. Montgomery and Bush. It was a small store, open five days a week. Primarily dedicated to businesswomen. You'd see them come in at noon, just rush in and buy. From noon until 2:00 the store was very busy and then maybe again at 4:30 or something like that. But that store was unique in being very highly concentrated in a very small space, but very successful.

06-00:03:13

Meeker: So you mentioned the architects working through Victor Gruen. I'm wondering what the interior architecture was that you were going for. Was there elegance? Were there specific design attributes that you said, "Listen, we understand that there's a certain flow to our stores and we want to maintain this." Or, "It's open to you. Why don't you innovate and improve the interior architecture of our stores."

06-00:03:48

Newman: I think we wanted to give all the stores a feeling of youth and brightness and cheerfulness. And we left it, to a large extent, to the architects and the interior people to do it. But, of course, everything was approved. You'd have to see the color of the carpets, the color of the walls, the front of the fixtures so that you knew it wasn't going to be outrageous. But things could be fun. There was one store down in Southern California where they had the block letters so huge showing where the departments were that were just all over the walls. It was very colorful. So each one was somewhat different.

06-00:04:41

Meeker: Well, that is an interesting question, because now if a new Gap opens up or if a new Starbucks opens up, it's cookie cutter. It's basically the same thing. Was there a moment in your expansion that there was a discussion saying, "Listen, can't we just roll out the exact same thing?"

06-00:05:01

Newman: No. The whole idea of JM was to be new and different and not cookie cutter. So you never knew exactly what you were going to expect.

06-00:05:18

Stein: I want to pick up on what you were talking about with the small stores, because it sounds like, as we continue to talk, there's a huge variety of the type of stores—

06-00:05:30

Newman: Right.

06-00:05:32

Stein: —you are going into. So you have downtown flagship stores, you have suburban stores, you have these small sort of rush hour business stores. Did you have more than just the downtown store in San Francisco or were there types of stores that seemed to be the most successful or places that you wanted to invest more as you continued to grow?

06-00:05:55

Newman: Well, of course, the Los Angeles area, the Century City store was a big store, and the downtown San Francisco store was a big store. The store in Oakland and the Kaiser Center was a good sized store. But different areas required different sized stores. Lake Tahoe, the South Shore, I think we built maybe a 5,000 square foot store. But it was a beautiful, really classic, store. We had a stream running through it with trout in it. It was just a great, great store. It was designed by a Berkeley architect and people loved it. Then the Las Vegas store was just a beautifully designed, very soft, rounded edges. We tried some hotel shops. We tried one in the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley. We found that they were not profitable for us. But the small stores generated a significant amount of business. We had a small store at Fox Plaza right on Market Street.

Maybe that was three or four thousand square feet. But it was a busy store and profitable, successful. So I guess in answer to your question, we designed the stores to accommodate what we thought the business would produce. It is more profitable to get more sales per square foot. So if you have a well-designed small store that's doing good significant business it can be profitable. If you have a big store that's not doing very much business, that's a loser.

06-00:08:19

Stein: So another strategy that it sounds like JM used was the idea of sort of a shop within the store. For example, the "Wolves Den" at Christmastime, was it? Could you tell us about the origins of the idea of the sort of smaller shops within the larger store and how those played out?

06-00:08:44

Newman: I think that was probably Cyril's idea. It was just a conception of making an area available to men for shopping. We got attractive young women to act as salespeople in there. Even served liquor. People wondered if we had a liquor license. Well, we didn't have a liquor license, but people could come in there and have a drink and do their shopping and it was fun. It worked out just great.

06-00:09:21

Stein: And was that only during Christmastime?

06-00:09:23

Newman: Yes.

06-00:09:24

Stein: Did you have it for many years running?

06-00:09:26

Newman: Yes. The women loved working there because some of them would get dates from these guys. It was very good.

06-00:09:38

Stein: It strikes me as kind of funny that the main business was targeting women who were striking out on independent careers, it sounds like.

06-00:09:48

Newman: Right.

06-00:09:49

Stein: I don't know if you'd use the word pre-feminist, but something for women who were no longer housewives to dress for business and then the Wolves Den sounds very much like of older gender roles. Was there any sense that

gender roles were changing at the time? Was that something that you even talked about?

06-00:10:12

Newman: I would say that most of the Joseph Magnin business was younger women or people who felt that they wanted to look young. We didn't have the gray haired business that I. Magnin had. Most of the people that shopped at JM were young married people, single people. I guess that would pretty much cover it.

06-00:10:53

Stein: Yes. How large was your men's business? You did mention that—

06-00:10:58

Newman: The men's business?

06-00:10:59

Stein: Yes. There were some other stores that had men's.

06-00:11:00

Newman: Well, that was something that came on rather late in the whole company's career and it never became a major part of the business, but it was significant. This was something that I think Jerry really conceived. Maybe Jerry and Donald together decided that we should go into the men's business. And we started it up and put it in certain stores and it was quite successful.

06-00:11:40

Stein: Who were your competitors? We've talked about your competitors a bit in the women's business. Was it quite different with men swear?

06-00:11:48

Newman: I would say that our primary business competitors in the men's department would have been Roos/Atkins and Brooks Brothers. I can't think of too many that are around anymore. It was primarily Roos/Atkins. They were our direct competitor.

06-00:12:22

Stein: And the identity of the men's wear business. Was it a similar dedication to youth and to color and innovation?

06-00:12:29

Newman: Yes. Definitely.

06-00:12:31

Stein: Okay. Speaking of competitors, so we talked a little bit about how Joseph Magnin managed to carve out a really unique niche and become really successful, in large part because you anticipated the youth trend. However, as

the sixties rolled around, I assumed that other retailers saw how successful you were and tried to imitate your business model or the selection that you had. How did the competitors that you were dealing with change over the course of the fifties and sixties? Did people catch up? Who are they and when did they finally nip at your heels?

06-00:13:10

Newman: They tried to copy us. And I'll never forget one gentlemen, I won't mention his name, but Joseph Magnin would have a particular thing that they were featuring. He would go and buy it. And he had a competitive store and he would put that in his window and market it for particularly less than we were selling it for. He was just so anxious to compete directly with Joseph Magnin. He wooed a number of our people away from us, too. So some of the smaller retailers were trying to emulate what Joseph Magnin was doing. I don't think that Saks or I. Magnin or—I'm just trying to think. It was Liebes and Livingston's in San Francisco. But they changed very much. I think we had captured the area of the market that we were shooting for and nobody else was really making an impact in what JM was doing.

06-00:14:36

Stein: So even as you grew, you still managed to stay ahead of pretty much all of the competition?

06-00:14:41

Newman: We did and that's why we were so attractive to shopping center developers, because there was nobody else that they could get to do what we were doing.

06-00:14:57

Stein: Did it become increasingly difficult to stay ahead or to stay innovative or relevant, as I assume the retail market in San Francisco and in the West became more competitive and grew over the course of these twenty or so years that we're looking at.

06-00:15:17

Newman: I don't think so. Our people were always forward looking, trying to find something that others didn't have. And I think I mentioned to you we flew everything out from the factories. Other people were using trucks but our philosophy was to be first. If we could get the jump on somebody, it was like breaking a news story before the other people had it. We'd put it in the windows, we'd put it in the ads before other people had it. And there was a lot of creativity on the part of our buyers. They would try to get exclusives on things that they designed. They might see something that they liked and make it in a certain color or something. So that we tried to be ahead of everybody else. I think that was part of the uniqueness. The public appreciated the fact that this was a company that was with it. If you wanted to find the newest and the most creative stuff, that's where you'd go.

06-00:16:42

Stein: So this is something that I don't fully understand, because I think it's a little different from how merchandising and buying works today. But you said that sometimes the buyers would design their own items. How would that work? Would they see something from Europe that they loved and come back and—

06-00:16:58

Newman: Copy it.

06-00:16:59

Stein: Did you have a legal department? Was that ever problematic?

06-00:17:04

Newman: No. No, there's no law against copying something. You can use something as a model and then make it differently. The one thing that turned the whole neighborhood upside down was the Rudi Gernreich topless bathing suit.

06-00:17:27

Stein: Did Joseph Magnin carry it?

06-00:17:28

Newman: They were the ones.

06-00:17:28

Stein: Did you sell it?

06-00:17:30

Newman: You bet.

06-00:17:31

Stein: To who? Do you remember?

06-00:17:32

Newman: I don't know. But that was a big promotion. Nobody else had the nerve to do it.

06-00:17:40

Stein: Right. And that went down in fashion history, certainly.

06-00:17:44

Newman: Yes.

06-00:17:47

Meeker: Was it a Gernreich original? So it was the actual Gernreich design?

06-00:17:52

Newman: Yes.

06-00:17:57

Stein: So let me think what I want to ask next. If you had to pick out a retailer today who you think would be the sort of—

06-00:18:04

Newman: That's easy.

06-00:18:05

Stein: Who is it?

06-00:18:05

Newman: J. Crew.

06-00:18:06

Stein: Interesting.

06-00:18:10

Newman: You know why?

06-00:18:11

Stein: Why?

06-00:18:12

Newman: Because there's a creativity there. And there's an advance thinking. He did it at the Gap.

06-00:18:24

Stein: Mickey Drexler?

06-00:18:24

Newman: Yes. And I go in there once in a while. But the women that I talk to all say J. Crew was the place we love to shop. You ever go in there?

06-00:18:40

Stein: Yes, when I can afford it. But I love the stuff. Yes.

06-00:18:46

Newman: Is there anyone that you think competes with them?

06-00:18:51

Stein: Certainly Banana Republic, to an extent, but I think you're right that there's—

06-00:18:56

Newman: But I think J. Crew is a little bit ahead of that.

06-00:18:58

Stein: Yes, and a little more innovative. Or we were thinking maybe Barney's, given how high end it sounds like Joseph Magnin was.

06-00:19:10

Newman: Well, Barney's, they've got the location that Joseph Magnin used to be in. I go in there and there's never another customer there. I don't know how they stay in business. But J. Crew has the same aura about it that Joseph Magnin had. It's hard to describe it.

06-00:19:34

Stein: One event that seems to have really put JM on the national radar was Linda Johnson's wedding.

06-00:19:41

Newman: Ellen did that.

06-00:19:44

Stein: So what happened? What was that story?

06-00:19:46

Newman: Well, Cyril was always very active in the Democratic Party and he was a delegate to a number of presidential nominations. He had been invited to the White House several times and took Ellen with him. They became friendly with Linda and the other daughter of Lyndon Johnson. And it's interesting because Cyril's sister-in-law was Adele Simpson and Adele made all of Mrs. Johnson's clothes, and also Mrs. Nixon's clothes. So I think it was Linda that Ellen dressed for her wedding. They came out here and I guess Cyril probably talked to the Johnson's and said, "We can do a better job for your daughter than anybody else. Send her out." And Ellen dressed her and it was fabulous.

06-00:21:05

Stein: That must have been quite a coup, beating out all of the East Coast department stores.

06-00:21:09

Newman: It was. You bet it was.

06-00:21:10

Stein: You talk about not expanding there but it sounds like you still had some sort of foothold.

06-00:21:14

Newman: I don't think they made a big publicity thing out of it, though. I think it was a favor to the Johnson's to do it.

06-00:21:23

Stein: Did you have a wedding business?

06-00:21:25

Newman: Yes, we did.

06-00:21:26

Stein: Okay. Was that significant or—?

06-00:21:28

Newman: Yes. The bridal department.

06-00:21:36

Stein: Why don't you tell us a little bit about your role in labor and negotiations.

06-00:21:46

Newman: Well, San Francisco had a retail group that negotiated labor contractions as a group, the department stores, with Macy's, the Emporium. I think they were the only two department stores. But then all the specialty stores were part of the retail management group. We negotiated as a group with the unions and there were quite a few different unions. And I represented Joseph Magnin at the labor and negotiating group. The whole idea was to have a uniform labor situation in the city. Hopefully it was non-union. Every several years we would have to sit down with the unions and negotiate a new contract, even though it was not a requirement that you join a union to work at Joseph Magnin. I don't remember exactly what the year was, but the unions made a demand for union shop. A union shop means that you don't have to be a union member when you join the company, but within thirty days you have to join the union. This was very unattractive. We didn't feel that we wanted to require our people to join the union. If they wanted to, they could, but we believed in freedom of choice. It came to the point where there was going to be a strike over this issue and all of the stores agreed to take a strike in order to not have to put everybody into the unions. And we all agreed we'd shore up, get ready for a strike, and everything was in order, and then Macy's caved in and Macy's agreed to sign a contract—

06-00:24:43

Stein: To become a union shop.

06-00:24:43

Newman: —to become a union store.

06-00:24:45

Stein: A union store. Closed shop?

06-00:24:49

Newman: No, a union shop. It's different. Closed shop means that you must be a union member to work there. Union shop means you don't have to be a union member to work there but you must join a union after you get there.

06-00:25:04

Stein: After you start working.

06-00:25:08

Newman: And so Macy's caved in and that was the end of it.

06-00:25:11

Stein: So then did the entire retail group?

06-00:25:14

Newman: All of them caved in. Yes.

06-00:25:16

Stein: And so from then on you were a union shop?

06-00:25:19

Newman: It's a union shop now.

06-00:25:20

Stein: How did that change labor relations?

06-00:25:24

Newman: Well, I think from management's point of view we were terribly disappointed because we had felt that most of our people, the sales people particularly, all worked on very good commission bases with a guarantee but with the opportunity to really make good money if the sales were there. We felt that making it a union shop took the initiative away from people and that they really were mostly interested in their salary and not having the opportunity to make commissions.

06-00:26:10

Stein: Did you have to change the pay structure? Did you take away—

06-00:26:12

Newman: We did.

06-00:26:13

Stein: So you took away commissions?

06-00:26:13

Newman: Some.

06-00:26:15

Stein: And raised the base salary.

06-00:26:17

Newman: Some.

06-00:26:19

Stein: Were the people who worked at the company—not management but everyone else—were they in support of the union shop? Is that correct? Or do you recall how peoples' opinions differed?

06-00:26:37

Newman: Well, I don't know. The unions represented the people and if you'd taken a strike, you couldn't take a strike independently. If your competitor had signed up and they were open for business and you had pickets around your store, you couldn't do that. We had to all do it or all fight it. And we were all ready to fight it until Macy's said no deal. And the Emporium followed Macy's and then the whole thing just fell apart.

06-00:27:20

Stein: So maybe I misunderstood. You said the strike that was about to happen. It would have been the employees striking in support of a union shop?

06-00:27:29

Newman: Yes.

06-00:27:30

Stein: Okay. But it didn't have to happen because Macy's agreed and then everyone followed.

06-00:27:37

Newman: Yes. And it kind of breaks my heart because my office today is in the building where the union is. And I see these people coming in every month to pay their dues and I think it runs about sixty dollars a month and I don't know what they get for it, to tell you the truth.

06-00:27:59

Stein: Was there any disagreement within the family or within the board about the issue?

06-00:28:04

Newman: No.

06-00:28:04

Stein: It was pretty clear.

06-00:28:05

Newman: There really wasn't anything we could do. This only pertained to the San Francisco store. None of the other stores had to go union.

06-00:28:14

Stein: Not even the other financial district store?

06-00:28:22

Newman: It did, yes. And Stonestown did, too.

06-00:28:26

Stein: Okay. So within San Francisco proper.

06-00:28:27

Newman: All of San Francisco. Yes.

06-00:28:29

Stein: Did you notice any difference in the selling behavior compared to the other stores?

06-00:28:34

Newman: I don't think so. But I think we felt that we were enlightened management, that we really cared about the people and they didn't have to join a union to get fair treatment. But that's the way the ball bounced and we had to take the pill.

06-00:29:00

Stein: Do you recall approximately what year that was? Or even decade?

06-00:29:08

Newman: Yes. It was in the early sixties.

06-00:29:12

Stein: Okay.

06-00:29:13

Meeker: Do you mind if follow-up?

06-00:29:13

Stein: Not at all. Yes, please do.

06-00:29:17

Meeker: So the question of labor activism and unionization in San Francisco is very interesting and it makes me think about some research I've done around civil rights, particularly around racial inequality in San Francisco and also around feminism and gender rights, around gender inequality. And I know in about 1964, 1963 or 1964, that's when the big civil rights protests hit San Francisco.

There were protests at the Sheraton Palace out on Auto Row and this mostly had to deal with civil rights organizations agitating to hire African Americans. And one of the results of this was the establishment of the Human Rights Commission in San Francisco, which later on in the 1960s plays a role in sort of both exercising soft power and using sort of moral suasion to try to get businesses, including retailers in San Francisco, to hire more African Americans, especially, and then later on they play a role in starting affirmative action programs, which were not soft power and much more hard power, enforcing certain percentages and a quantitative approach to hiring. I'm wondering, when you were managing Joseph Magnin, how did you interact with this changing labor environment vis-à-vis civil rights?

06-00:30:58

Newman: As far as Joseph Magnin was concerned, there was no racial—not segregation but there was no—

06-00:31:14

Meeker: Discrimination?

06-00:31:15

Newman: —discrimination whatsoever. We had very large groups of all the minorities in the company and in all levels, too. The people that worked in the basement, people who worked in the receiving and shipping department. It was like an international house. And Mr. Magnin was a true liberal. Cyril was a true liberal. I think I mentioned the fact that he was the first one to hire the Japanese out of the camps. We were very proud of the relationship with the Asian community and the Afro-American community. There was never any question at Joseph Magnin of any racial inequalities.

06-00:32:26

Meeker: But during this period of time you start to get a much more active and activist civil government.

06-00:32:32

Newman: Didn't affect us.

06-00:32:34

Meeker: So that you never really felt any pressure?

06-00:32:35

Newman: None at all.

06-00:32:36

Meeker: Okay. Because certainly the government and the commissions did start to exert pressure, for instance, on Auto Row to demand hiring of more minorities. But you never felt that?

06-00:32:50

Newman: No. No, we had more than our share.

06-00:32:56

Meeker: Okay. Well, then the next question is I think about what's around gender and the employment of women and I think there's some interesting labor law that starts to happen in the 1960s and certainly in the 1970s, and maybe the most famous cases have to do with flight attendants of airlines, because in the fifties and sixties that was a very high profile job for a young woman to get and it was sort of the face of the airline and stewardesses, as they were called, or often hired for their beauty and their poise. The idea was that they would retire once they got married or something like that. There wouldn't be fifty-five year old stewardesses serving cocktails to businessmen on airplanes. One way or another, whether it was being fired or whether it was moving on to marriage, that job would end for them at a certain age. It sounds like, to a certain extent, retail business—I just wonder if this happened and how Joseph Magnin responded to maybe the pressures later in the 1960s around maybe allowing women to continue to work after they were married. Do you see what I'm getting at? I'm not really articulating this very well.

06-00:34:32

Newman: No, I understand what you mean.

06-00:34:34

Meeker: Okay. Because I know that feminism as a movement didn't really manifest until the 1970s and so I don't know the extent to which Joseph Magnin in the 1960s would have received any pressure about this. But was there any kind of pressure from organized women's organizations during this period of time about employment standards?

06-00:35:00

Newman: I would say that Joseph Magnin was a leader in women's rights and giving every person that worked there the opportunity to do the very best that they could as long as they wanted to stay there. I was very close to the personnel situation and I don't know that we ever, in any sense, tried to induce somebody to leave because they were getting older or for any reason than poor performance. And really the ones who had been there, the older people, had what we called a following. They had a book of business. One of the things that JM always did was to call customers and say, "I've got something here that I think you're going to really like. It just came in. Please come down." And the older women were the ones that made the most money because they had the larger book of business and the commissions were high.

06-00:36:22

Meeker: They had the rolodex.

06-00:36:24

Newman: Yes. And they used it. But, again, I mention to you that the whole Magnin image of giving young women the opportunity to thrive was well-known throughout the state. And young women would come. We were talking about Nordstroms. They always looked for people that were community leaders and people who had a very outgoing personality. JM was very much like that. They wanted young people who wanted to make a career and have an exciting time in fashion. Young women thrived there. Everybody loved to work there. Dozens of people would try to get a job there all the time. It was a great place to work and we never had any pressure from outside unions other than the labor negotiation. Any of the minority groups was not a problem.

06-00:37:52

Stein: Okay. So the next sort of business move that we would like to talk about is the decision to go public in 1960. I'm curious. For most companies it has to do with raising capital so that you can expand further. But what were the discussions that went into the decision to go public and who was involved in that?

06-00:38:19

Newman: Well, the decision to go public was made by the board of directors. I've told you who they were. There was a need to raise capital. If we were going to continue to expand, we had to have more capital and that was really the best way to get it. Furthermore, it made a market for Joseph Magnin stock, which would have helped, to a large extent, with Cyril's estate planning, because otherwise there was no market for the Joseph Magnin stock and this established a value for it. If he wanted to sell it, he could. So going public also would increase the value of the family's net worth if the company did well. If you did not go public, the only way that the company could be sold would be for somebody to come in and say, "Well, I'll buy it at such and such a price." If you were a public company, all the values were there and the stock could be purchased by an outside organization if they wanted to do so.

06-00:40:11

Stein: Was there any sense at that time that maybe some day you would want to sell the company?

06-00:40:16

Newman: No. There was never any discussion of selling the company. In fact, I think they'd hoped that it would be able to continue.

06-00:40:30

Stein: So it was more about expanding. Getting the capital to expand more.

06-00:40:34

Newman: Yes. Definitely.

06-00:40:38

Stein: Was there any discussion? Were there any debates against going public?

06-00:40:42

Newman: No.

06-00:40:45

Stein: Now, how much control did the family retain?

06-00:40:51

Newman: I think that Cyril had pretty close to half, half of the company.

06-00:41:00

Stein: Do you remember if it was above half or below half or did that make—

06-00:41:02

Newman: Below half.

06-00:41:03

Stein: And did that make a significant difference in the way that you could make decisions?

06-00:41:07

Newman: I don't think so. He had the voting rights of Joseph's stock plus his own. Cyril virtually controlled the company. But he never used that particularly. The children didn't. I think Joseph had given them some stock but it was not significant.

06-00:41:41

Stein: Did other people end up coming in?

06-00:41:44

Newman: They did. The public bought the stock.

06-00:41:47

Stein: Did that cause any changes to the way that you now had to run the business? Because now you're not just looking after the family, you're trying to ensure shareholder returns.

06-00:42:00

Newman: Well, the company was very conscious of its responsibility to the shareholders. And as I think I mentioned to you, I think the most I ever made was \$50,000. We could have taken a lot more but the feeling was keep the funds in the company and never be subject to criticism of trying to use the public's investments for your own benefit. We were there for the shareholders. It sounds sort of Pollyannaish but we really wanted to see

earnings for the company so that people could get a good dividend and they'd be happy to buy the stock.

06-00:43:03

Stein: Do you recall whether the increased value of the company was mostly coming from new stores or from increased volume in the existing stores?

06-00:43:10

Newman: Both.

06-00:43:11

Stein: Okay. That's a healthy company. Yes. And once you did the public offering, now that you had a significantly larger amount of capital, did you go on a spate of new openings? How did you use that momentum?

06-00:43:32

Newman: Well, we were continuing our program of opening several stores every year and then had some opportunities sort of focused—I can't remember the exact year, but that was the year we opened five stores at one time. It was in three months we opened five stores.

06-00:44:00

Stein: Wow. Did you have to expand? Did you need new people on board in the headquarters in order to keep that pace up?

06-00:44:07

Newman: You bet we did.

06-00:44:09

Stein: And were there new people that were coming into sort of the echelon of the family? It sounds like for most of the company the upper management was all family members.

06-00:44:20

Newman: Yes.

06-00:44:21

Stein: Were there ever people who joined that group or who rose through the ranks?

06-00:44:25

Newman: Yes. I think Tony Nocita, who was the controller and treasurer of the company. He was really at the upper echelon. But, again, there was not a major distinction. You had the management team and then you had the next level of people who were responsible for very major parts of the company. I had a number of people that worked for me that were earning very good salaries and they had big responsibilities. And Donald had a lot of merchants working for him who also had big responsibilities.

06-00:45:26

Stein: I suppose when Cyril got married it was kind of a big deal because his wife had worked inside the store, was in the better apparel department. And I imagine that that wasn't quite such a big taboo by the sixties when you were running the company. As you developed, it sounds like there was really a familial atmosphere from the top to the bottom. Were there social occasions where everyone came together? Was there a sense of community outside of the store itself?

06-00:46:05

Newman: I don't think so. Cyril liked to have ladies around. Donald's wife was working in the company. Ellen was very active in the business. And those are the only relationships that I knew of. I don't think there was. I don't think we ever had any parties, particularly, where all of the employees were invited. When you had an opening of the store, you'd have people there. There was nothing very social that went on.

06-00:47:00

Stein: Right. It sounds like everyone was working incredibly hard.

06-00:47:03

Newman: We were working six days a week and nights.

06-00:47:07

Stein: Oh, wow. So in 1960 when the company goes public to 1968 when the sale took place to Amfac, what were those years like? It seems like to some extent those were almost the high point of the company in terms of business.

06-00:47:28

Newman: They were. We were growing quickly and things were going very well. We had no idea that things would change, although we'd kind of reached the end of our expansion. There were not too many good opportunities around for us to continue to grow.

06-00:47:56

Stein: When did that become clear to you or what did you—

06-00:48:01

Newman: Middle sixties, I guess.

06-00:48:02

Stein: Okay. And did you have other strategies in place? It doesn't sound like you're the type of person to just sit around and wait to see what happens.

06-00:48:10

Newman: No. We wanted to build the business within the framework of the stores that we had. And if unique opportunities presented themselves, I think we were

ready to take advantage of them. We might have acquired another company. There might have been some major developments that we wanted to go into. We didn't have any farsighted program of what we wanted to do. We were just working day to day.

06-00:48:47

Stein: Do you have any questions before we go onto the sale?

06-00:48:53

Meeker: Why don't you maybe ask about Arizona market.

06-00:48:56

Stein: Oh, yes. So we talked about the northwest. I'm curious about the southwest. Also, were there ever plans to go into Arizona, into New Mexico, into maybe not Texas, because that seemed to be taken, but were there other westward expansions?

06-00:49:16

Newman: We thought of going into Arizona but we didn't feel that the reward was really worth the risk. That there were a couple of large cities. There was really Phoenix and Tucson and that that really would have been it. And it might have been a logical expansion but the population wasn't nearly as concentrated there as it was in California. When you were in Los Angeles, you were talking about millions and millions of people. In Phoenix, at that time, you weren't talking about that many. So it would not have been a major move for us.

06-00:50:03

Stein: Were there other locations that were tried and then dropped?

06-00:50:08

Newman: Not at that point. We really were kind of used up.

06-00:50:15

Stein: So it sounds like the decision to ultimately sell almost came out of the blue.

06-00:50:24

Newman: Well, that's a story in itself.

06-00:50:25

Stein: So why don't you tell us about that.

06-00:50:26

Newman: Okay. Well, I was in my office and a friend of mine, Marshall Weigel, who was with the Bank of America called me out of a clear blue sky and said, "Walter, do you think Joseph Magnin Company is for sale?" And I said, "No, it's not for sale. It's a public company." And he said, "At any price?" And I said, "Look, we have a responsibility to the stockholders. Everything's for

sale at some price.” “Well,” he said, “would you find out? I’ve got some people here that want to buy the company.” I said, “I’m obligated to do that. I’ll get back to you.” So I called Mr. Magnin and I said, “This is a responsible man and I think we ought to really discuss this.” So he said, “Well, let’s get the family together.” Cyril virtually said, “Look, we hear this stuff all the time. People are always fishing around for a deal.” I said, “Well, they sound like they’re very serious.” Well, at that time stores were selling for ten times earnings and Cyril said, “Oh, I’ll tell you what let’s do. Let’s just throw a ridiculous number at them and that’ll be the end of it.” And I said, “Well, what do you think will be ridiculous?” And he said, “Thirty times earnings.” And the others said, “Well, okay, go ahead and try. Doesn’t cost anything to try.” So I called Marshall back and I said, “Marshall, the company is not for sale but the family said they might be ready to talk at thirty times earnings.” He said, “We’ll be right over.” And that was the beginning of the sale to Amfac.

Amfac was a Hawaiian conglomerate that was run by a man by the name of Henry Walker. They had a group of stores in Hawaii called Liberty House. Very nice junior department stores. Amfac was one of what they called the Big Five in Hawaii. They own huge amounts of land and real estate and sugarcane and they wanted to divest themselves of some of the Hawaiian properties and expand on the mainland to diversify. So they came to San Francisco and looked around for opportunities. They ended up buying the City of Paris department store and then I guess they wanted to do some other retail because they felt they had the expertise from Liberty House. So the negotiations started with Amfac and the family said, “Look, we want most of it in cash if we’re going to sell.” And they offered three-quarters cash and one-quarter convertible debentures. And they said, “Well, we want the management to stay.” And we said, “Okay, we’ll stay. But why are you buying this company?” They said, “We want to expand it nationally. We really want to make it a national entity.” Which was what we had hoped we might be able to do at some point ourselves but had not the capital to do it. This company had a lot of money. So we agreed to sign five year contracts to stay with them. And the deal went through. The board voted to accept it. And Amfac bought the company. And they changed management. They brought in a fellow named Bob Berry who had been with Neiman Marcus as the CEO. They wanted to send me to Los Angeles to run a store and I think they wanted Donald to go to Hawaii to be a merchandiser and Jerry to do something, come to San Francisco.

So it was only maybe a year after that that we all got together and said, “Look, they don’t really want us here.” They said they did. We’ve got contracts. But if they don’t want us, we don’t want to be here. So I went to Mr. Walker and I said, “Look, why don’t we just make some arrangement, buy us out and we’ll all go on our own way.” So they did. I don’t remember exactly how much they paid us. I still have the headline in my office. “Magnin Management Walks Out.” And they thought they were going to do a job and they bought

this great company, it was earning well, and in a matter of three or four years, they called me and they said, "We've lost so much money that we can't continue to own the company. Can you find us a buyer?" So I got a hold of my friend, Marshall Weigel. I was in the real estate business at that point. And we started to look around for buyers and we found the Hillman Company in Pittsburgh who were interested in buying it. So we brokered a sale from Amfac to the Hillman Company. And they ran it for a while. They lost a lot of money. They sold it to a company. It was kind of a turnaround company. And those people preceded to milk it and then the company went bankrupt.

06-00:58:18

Stein: Do you remember what year that was? In the late seventies or the early eighties?

06-00:58:22

Newman: Yes, the late seventies.

06-00:58:24

Stein: Yes.

Interview #4: July 9, 2010

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07-00:00:11

Stein: Today is July 9, 2010. This is Julie Stein here with Walter Newman and this is tape number seven. Okay. So we finished talking last time with a story of the decision to sell the Joseph Magnin Company.

07-00:00:26

Newman: Yes.

07-00:00:27

Stein: So the winding down of that. I'd love to talk a little bit more, sort of rewind a little bit and talk about some of the decision making that went into the sale and a little bit more about the later years of the company. So my first question. We talked about the sort of unprecedented sale price of Joseph Magnin, that it was almost a deal that was too good to refuse, it sounds like.

07-00:08:51

Newman: Exactly.

07-00:08:53

Stein: I'm curious whether you remember any reservations or any potential disagreements or dissension as the board discussed the sale or was it really impossible to refuse?

07-00:01:09

Newman: I think one or two of the members of the family had some reservations about it because there was such a strong tradition of the family connection with the company. And I know Ellen's brother Donald, who was the general merchandise manager, loved the work so much. I think if he had had to make the decision himself he might not have wanted to sell the company. But I think everybody realized that it was a very unbelievably high price, and as Mr. Cyril Magnin used to say, "There's always a time to get out of the game." And we also had something to deal with as far as his estate was concerned, because most of his assets were tied up in the stock of Joseph Magnin Company. It would have probably involved selling most of that stock to pay the taxes on his inheritance. So this freed up a great deal of cash and made it possible for him to settle that estate. But the vote was unanimous. I don't know any other reservations that I've ever heard from Jerry. I know Ellen was in favor of it. Cyril certainly was. As far as I was concerned, I was a neutral because I'd just brought the offer to them. It really was their decision. Everybody was very happy that it was done.

07-00:03:16

Stein: You mentioned that fairly quickly after the sale, Amfac started making some mistakes.

07-00:03:25

Newman: Well, Amfac was one of the most poorly run companies that you could possibly imagine. It was one of the big five in Hawaii and they wanted to diversify and get out of just the Hawaiian enterprises. So when they came to do California, they had a wonderful acquisition vice-president by the name of Larry Gay and Larry Gay was one of the brightest people that I've ever worked with. And every one of his acquisitions for their company was a good one. But they did not know how to run them. And you see a man like Warren Buffett, who buys companies but he keeps the management there. He buys the management. They bought the companies and then destroyed the management team. That was unfortunately what happened at Joseph Magnin Company. We had what I think was one of the best management teams in the business. Of course, when they decided they wanted to buy the company, they had visions of expanding the company nationally and using us as part of the management team. And we all had five year contracts. But I think I mentioned before, they wanted me to go to Los Angeles to run a store and Jerry to do some rather medium level management job and Donald to go to Hawaii. We just said, "Look, you folks have these contracts with us but you really don't need us if you want us to do those things. Why don't we agree to leave?" We settled the contract with them and went on our way.

07-00:05:29

Stein: Was there a transition? It sounds like when they bought the company they were very committed, or at least understood that the management team was one of the core reasons that Joseph Magnin was so successful. And yet, there was then quite quickly this transition to dispersing you and your family members across to these sort of middle level positions that you clearly weren't very excited about. Was there a transition in there that you witnessed?

07-00:05:58

Newman: No, not really. I think they realized that there would be a transition period when the Amfac team would come in and the Joseph Magnin team would probably leave, which would have been five years. But it was quite evident. They brought a team in there and they just kind of put us all on the sidelines.

07-00:06:25

Stein: Do you recall how quickly they brought in the new CEO, Bob Barry?

07-00:06:34

Newman: Yes.

07-00:06:35

Stein: Do you know how long that was after the sale?

07-00:06:36

Newman: It was almost immediate. He came from Neiman Marcus. And Bob was a good person, good manager. But, of course, they kept Mr. Magnin on sort of as an icon, because he had such a visible presence in the community and actually nationally. I don't think they consulted with Cyril very much. And Bob Berry brought his own team in. Not for very long. Things didn't go very well with them, I don't think. I don't remember exactly because we left.

07-00:07:28

Stein: Right. Did you have a sense of what Mr. Magnin's role was after they replaced him as CEO?

07-00:07:38

Newman: I think he was a name and a face that everyone recognized. He had made the company what it was and I think they were very happy to have him around for advice. He didn't make any major decisions at all. He was just there.

07-00:08:03

Stein: So even after the family left the company, even after you buy out your five year contracts, Cyril Magnin remained on the board. I believe you said that your wife Ellen also remained on the board.

07-00:08:16

Newman: She did.

07-00:08:17

Stein: Could you talk about their role in the company in the years after the rest of the family had departed?

07-00:08:26

Newman: Well, I think Cyril was just really an advisor. I don't know what his relationship was with Bob Berry. But Ellen was really sort of a fashion consultant that they would call periodically when they had a question—I don't think she had any influence to speak of—in running the company. Ellen's a very bright person and knew the company very well and knew the fashion world very well. So I think they saw a value in having her.

The story of what happened to Ellen is a tragedy when it comes to her relationship with Amfac. She went on the board of Amfac, of the big company, and it was fun for her because every other board meeting was held in Hawaii. There was kind of a party involved every time they had a board meeting over there and Amfac owned lots of different hotels on different islands and the spouses were invited to the meetings. It was always fun. I had a good time because Ellen was the only female director on the Amfac Company, so the spouses, and I was one of the spouses, would always go someplace. I had all these women and we just had a good time.

Ellen did contribute significantly to the board deliberations. And Ellen is a very smart businesswoman. She majored in accounting at Stanford and she knows a lot about business. Over the course of several years as a director, Ellen felt that the company was not being honest in reporting its profits. And she started to investigate through their officers some of the things that were happening. And she continued to investigate because she felt they were reporting earnings by selling real estate. And Ellen refused to be side tracked on this. She felt she was a director, she had a responsibility to the shareholders and she had to do this. Well, the management of Amfac resented that tremendously. And I will never forget, as long as I will live, a very good friend of ours, George Link, who was one of the senior partners of Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison, one of the big law firms in California, asked to have lunch with Ellen and to bring me along. And we had lunch together, sort of had some pleasantries, and he said, "Now, I'm going to tell you what I have been told to do." He said, "Do not shoot the messenger." But he said to Ellen, "I have authority to offer you \$50,000 a year for life to leave the board." Well, I just about exploded. I said, "This is bribery." He said, "Don't shoot the messenger." He said, "I am just the lawyer here." But he said, "They feel that Ellen is a disturbing factor on the board and they would like to have her leave." Well, Ellen refused, which may not have been such a wise move. But in any event, she continued as a board member and then the management of Amfac got a group of the Hawaiian directors to form a committee. It was almost like a kangaroo court to try Ellen. And it was a tragedy for her because she was doing her job. The way it ended up is when it came time for election of new directors, Ellen's name was dropped and then that terminated her relationship with Amfac. But it was a very disturbing series of events and we've never forgotten it.

07-00:14:01

Stein: What happened to Amfac as a company? It sounds like they weren't—

07-00:14:06

Newman: Well, I'm giving you a personal observation now. Larry Gay bought outstanding companies and I know of four or five, each one of which was very profitable and very well run.

07-00:14:25

Stein: Were these all retail companies?

07-00:14:26

Newman: No. They were diversified. There was a large landscaping company. There was a large fishing company, an Alaskan fishing company. There was a pharmaceutical company and several others. And there was a mushroom company. All of whom, I believe, had quality management. But they messed every one of them up, to the point that Amfac went bankrupt.

07-00:15:06

Stein: Do you remember when that was or do you know?

07-00:15:11

Newman: Gosh. It must have been about five years after they bought Joseph Magnin.

07-00:15:20

Stein: Okay. Is there a grain of happiness in that?

07-00:15:26

Newman: Well, I was very sad to see it but I have to really blame the CEO of Amfac. He was a very determined, very difficult individual who ran it like an empire. They didn't recognize the talent of the people that they had. It's really a sad story.

07-00:15:57

Stein: Yes, yes. I know that counter-factuals can often be quite difficult to imagine, but occasionally could be useful. If you could go back to that 1968 sale offer, could you have seen the company going in different directions without selling or did it seem like that was really the most likely option at that point?

07-00:16:30

Newman: Well, we were not a large company. We had a wonderful reputation and we probably could have expanded further but it would have taken a lot of financing. And probably the other logical direction would have been to have been acquired by a larger company. Possibly a retail company like Federated Department Stores or Macy's. Some company that wanted to be represented in the fashion world but needed an existing company to do it. As far as I know, there were none interested at the time, and when you look today at the retail industry, really the only family company that's been successful has been Nordstrom's. But Saks Fifth Avenue certainly would not have been an acquirer. Neiman Marcus would not have been an acquirer of ours. So I suppose if Amfac hadn't come along with this offer Joseph Magnin might have continued pretty much in the West and probably would have been able to sustain itself. But I don't know if I mentioned to you the fact that one of the great profit centers of the company was in the credit aspects of the business, where everyone had a credit card with the company and the interest that was paid on the outstanding balances was an income for the company. Today it's all Visa and MasterCard and that aspect of it is gone. And the fashion business is a very volatile business. As Mr. Magnin used to say, "The merchandise is like fruits and vegetables. It gets staler every day." The mark-ups are good if you can sell it, but if you don't, it loses value each and every day. So I only look at the competitors that were in the business and people that were in a similar line in other cities. And you don't find very many family companies left. So I think the timing was absolutely perfect. If we hadn't done that, it would have been tough sledding for Joseph Magnin in the future.

07-00:19:45

Stein: It's interesting. I think you have a really interesting perspective on a lot of the changes in the retail industry as the years went on. You did mention that at one point Carter Hawley Hale approached you and said, "If you'd, we'd like you to start a new company. We'll give you all the resources you need," which you turned down. I'm curious if you can even think of what angle a successful company at that point would have needed to break into this very difficult marketplace.

07-00:20:24

Newman: Well, at that point we only had one discussion with Mr. Hawley and it was a very broad stroke proposal. He just said, "Let's do it." He didn't talk about the capital that was needed or what it would mean to their company, to Carter Hawley Hale, which went bankrupt, too. So it's hard to visualize what would have happened. It would have been an extremely costly thing but they might have formed a new company and gone public with it. I just don't know.

07-00:21:06

Stein: Sort of wrapping up this time period, if you have reflections on the legacy of Joseph Magnin, both on San Francisco, on the West and on the fashion industry.

07-00:21:28

Newman: Well, I think Joseph Magnin was really one of the most creative, the most dynamic, the most exciting retail companies that I was ever aware of. To this day, and I don't know, what is it, some thirty or forty years later, people say, "That was my favorite store. I always used to shop there. I just loved that store." Well, it was an exciting place and everyone recognized it. It was viewed as the young, dynamic retail company in America. I don't think there was anybody else like it. You see people like J. Crew today and Nordstrom's. They also are very widely recognized as being creative. But JM was really out in front of everybody. Their advertising was unique, their presentation, the boxes that they used, their store design. They wanted to be ahead of the game. They wanted to be the leaders and I think they were successful. And people haven't forgotten it.

07-00:23:02

Stein: On a more personal level, your own career after that as a businessman, were there particular lessons that you learned from your time in the retail industry?

07-00:23:18

Newman: Well, Cyril Magnin was really one of the most wonderful people in the world and he and I had just the nicest relationship. Couldn't have been nicer if he'd been my own father. And I learned so much from him that helped me in my life. I used to have to be the no person for him. Cyril loved everybody and he couldn't say no. He couldn't fire anybody. He'd have to call me and say, "Walter, we've got to let this person go." And he said, "I can't do it."

[laughter] He was such a genuine lovable individual that I think some of it rubbed off on me. He loved life and he loved challenges. And regardless of what the need was, he said, "I'll step in there and do it." And Ellen and I have tried to do that. She's kind of on my case right now because I'm doing too many things. I'm eighty-eight years old but I've got more balls in the air now than I've had in years. And she is, too. And I think a lot of that comes from Cyril. Jerry is very much like that. Donald isn't quite. Donald's a little more subdued. But it all came from a direct line from Pop. So I treasure my days at Joseph Magnin and I've had an extremely happy life. I have the most wonderful marriage in the world, I've got great kids and every day is a happy one for me. So the Joseph Magnin challenge, we worked like Trojans, all of us, six days a week and nights. It was our heart. And the family had everything tied up in it, so it wasn't a matter of do you want to do it. You had to do it.

07-00:25:57

Stein: Right. Do you remember what it was like the day after you left the company? The first Saturday that you had had off in twenty years?

07-00:26:06

Newman: You know what happened? When I left the company, Bob Shannon, who was the president of I. Magnin [cough]—excuse me—was our major competitor. And he called me and he said, "Walter, you've got to come over here. I need you." He said, "We want some of the dynamics that Joseph Magnin had put in this company and we don't know how to do it. You know how to do it. Well, I said to Bob, "Let me think about it." I came home and Ellen and I said, "Look, we've never really had a great vacation. I'd really like to try this thing with I. Magnin, but let's take a trip." Let's go around the world. Let's go to all the places that we may never have another chance to go to. This is the time. Our kids were all well situated in school. I said to Bob Shannon, "If I can take a nice trip with my wife, would that work out for you?" He said, "You take as long as you need." So we planned a trip around the world. That was unforgettable. So after that, we came back and I went to I. Magnin.

07-00:27:40

Stein: What was your role at I. Magnin?

07-00:27:42

Newman: I was vice-president. I did a lot for them. I really helped move them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A lot of it had to do with the flow of merchandise. They weren't nearly as fast as JM was. There were a lot of things that I was able to do for them. And then Bob Shannon, I forget exactly what happened, but he either retired or he left. A new CEO came in who didn't know me and he said, "What do you do here?" And I said, "Well, I do whatever I think you need." And he said, "Well, I'm going to do that." And so I decided, and he decided, that we would part the ways.

07-00:28:42

Stein: How many years were you at I. Magnin?

07-00:28:45

Newman: About four.

07-00:28:47

Stein: Okay. And was there any sense of going onto enemy lines or going to your competitor?

07-00:28:59

Newman: No. I always have said when you sell your house you can't live in it. Never look back. You did what you did because you thought it was the right thing to do and you go forward. I never regretted that. It was a new business and they had similar problems to Joseph Magnin and I stepped right in. It was like going to just a different office.

07-00:29:27

Stein: Yes, yes. Were there family members, any family members still involved in that company?

07-00:29:31

Newman: No. I. Magnin had originally been a family company but it was purchased by Bullock's. And Bullock's then was purchased by Federated. So I was really with Federated Department Stores and I had to go back to Columbus, Ohio, with the headquarters at Federated to meet with them periodically. It was fun.

07-00:29:59

Stein: What was I. Magnin at that point? Were they expanding? Were they deepening their hold in the West Coast? What was the sort of snapshot of the company when you were there?

07-00:30:09

Newman: Well, I. Magnin was probably one of the greatest names in fashion retailing. When Federated, which is the largest department store company in America acquired them, it was kind of a jewel, a small jewel in the crown. I. Magnin was a specialty store. Everything else they owned was a department store. I think they liked it because it was a very classic name. It was highly recognized in the fashion world. But Federated just felt it was too small, that it didn't fit into their whole picture of department stores and so they closed it. Sold it. Not sold it, but closed it up. And Macy's is in there now.

07-00:31:17

Stein: Right, right. On Union Square. So you really had a very remarkable perspective of San Francisco's retail history. Do you have any thoughts on how San Francisco's retail atmosphere has changed up to the current day or

how those two companies that you played an important role in shaped that particular business history?

07-00:31:47

Newman:

Oh, that's a very interesting question. Things have changed dramatically in retailing now. I remember in the times when we were in business, there were a lot of home-owned stores, family owned companies, and the people who owned these companies had a real interest in the city. But those stores have all gone. Livingston's, Liebes's, Davis Schonwasser. Probably eight or ten of them, and they're all closed now. Today, what you have are primarily branches of major companies, like Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom's, and then the smaller stores, something like H&M. Well, there are a number of other smaller ones. But there's not the home-owned type of retailer that there was fifty years ago. You could probably go to almost any major city and you'd see the same stories. It's lost a lot of the personal character that it used to have.

My father had probably the prime hard goods store in San Francisco, Charles Brown & Sons. If you were buying dinnerware or a television set or a refrigerator, you would have gone to Charles Brown. Well, unionization became a major factor in the retail business. Almost all the stores now are unionized. That made it more difficult to operate a retail store because you can't move people around the way you used to. You have to follow a contract very carefully. So a lot of the freedom of operation has vanished. So it's much more structured today than it was in those days.

07-00:35:01

Meeker:

So it was clear reading through Cyril's memoir that he had a great and ongoing interest in politics, given his relationships with Presidents and given his engagement through fundraising and so forth for politicians who he supported. Did you share the same interest in politics? How did you approach the political sphere as a private citizen?

07-00:35:36

Newman:

I didn't. We were too busy, too busy working so that Cyril could do his thing. He was able to free himself from a lot of the day to day responsibilities because Donald was running the merchandizing and the rest of us were helping to run the business. And so Cyril had a lot of free time and he loved people and people loved him. He was a great Democrat. I think all of his career he was quite liberal.

07-00:36:14

Meeker:

Big D and small d, I assume?

07-00:36:16

Newman:

Yes.

07-00:36:18

Meeker: Yes.

07-00:36:19

Newman: And Cyril, frankly, he was not a multimillionaire and he wasn't able to donate seven figures to anybody. But when Cyril called somebody, they listened. I saw him on numerous occasions where on charitable ventures that he was handling, or he was heading up, he'd pick up the phone and call the president of Chevron or the president of Bank of America and the big bucks would flow. He contributed as much as he could but they all respected him tremendously. Because Cyril had no ulterior motives whatsoever. He never wanted anything personal for what he did. He just wanted to be a good public servant. I'll never forget when he was the head of the Port of San Francisco. That was a major thing that he did. The Port was owned by the State of California and he was able to convince the governor to transfer the Port to the City. Today, that's one of the biggest generators of income for San Francisco. He did all kinds of wonderful things for people without asking for any credit.

07-00:37:59

Meeker: It sounds like your involvement in politics was fairly limited. But I understand that you did support Alioto for mayor.

07-00:38:07

Newman: Well, that's a very interesting story. There were a group of pretty heavy Democrats, Ben Swig, Adolph Schuman, Cyril and probably ten or twelve others, who were kind of the downtown business people, and they had a voice at City Hall because they represented the business community of San Francisco. There was going to be a mayoralty election and the candidate that everybody was behind, he was dearly loved in San Francisco, was Gene McAteer. He was an All American guard at Cal. He was a state senator and did an excellent job and was going to become the mayor. There was just no question about it. He was playing handball at the Olympic Club and dropped dead on the court six weeks before the election. Well, this group of men, including Cyril, met in Cyril's apartment and said, "What are we going to do for a candidate?" Here this great man is no longer here. We've got all the money raised for his candidacy. Joe Alioto was part of the group. He raised his hand and said, "I'll run," and they said, "Okay, we'll get behind you." Six weeks to go.

Well, Ellen and I recognized the ability of Joe Alioto. He was one of the most charismatic, dynamic, effective men that I have ever known. And when somebody of that caliber volunteers to do something for the public, we said, really for the first time, "We're going to go all out and help this guy get elected." We had no ulterior motives at all. We had some receptions here at the house to bring people that we knew to meet him. And he appreciated that. It was all part of the campaign, I guess. Well, Alioto won going away and we sort of became friendly and he called me one day and he said, "Walter, I want

you to be in my administration. What would you like to do?" Well, I had done a lot of planning work for Joseph Magnin and I'd done some civic work, too. I said, "I'd like to be on the planning commission." And he said, "Well, I would love to have you there and I want you to be the president." Well, I said, "I'm honored to do it. I hope I can."

Well, he then appointed a commission and I am so proud to say that I don't think I have ever known a greater, more professional or more public spirited group of people than he appointed. People like Mortimer Fleishhacker, Junior. One of the really stalwart people in this community. I don't think he ever had a political appointment. He went on the board. John Ritchie, one of our leading real estate people were on the board. Hector Rueda, who was the head of the elevator union. He had to have a union person on there and Hector was a terrific person, too. There's one other, Julie Porter, a wise and dedicated San Francisco planner.

But we never had a disagreement publicly. We would always discuss a controversial issue beforehand and would come out with a unanimous approval of whatever it was. We were dedicated and we had a staff that I don't think has ever been duplicated in San Francisco, as far as I know. Allan Jacobs was the Director of City Planning and he was a true professional planner. A man with great vision, very courageous in his points of view, unafraid to come out with a controversial idea. He hired Dean Macris as his assistant, who then succeeded him as planning director, and then he had an outstanding staff. I would say that we probably did as good a job as a planning commission could do. A lot of intelligence went into our decisions. All of us loved the city dearly. We all had long backgrounds here and we wanted to see the city go ahead. Rather than putting obstacles in front of development, we tried to help them get where they wanted to be. We believed that diversity made a city.

I've taken issue with subsequent planning commissions because they have something called discretionary review. It's very easy to ask for a discretionary review, really because maybe you don't like something. Well, maybe I don't like it. Maybe you do. Maybe the rest of the world does. Diversity is what makes a city. You can have things like the Eiffel Tower, you can have all kinds of things that people really dislike at the time of it being initiated and then they become icons. They become monuments. That was the biggest issue that came up in my eight years as planning president. When the Transamerica Building was proposed to be built, it was the most controversial issue in San Francisco.

07-00:45:18

Meeker:

So I want to talk about this but I have a few follow-up questions before we get into the Transamerica story.

07-00:45:22

Newman: Yes, certainly.

07-00:45:23

Meeker: You said discretionary view. Can you define that for me? How does that differ from other kinds of review?

07-00:45:31

Newman: Well, a commissioner can ask for discretionary review about a project, whether they think they like it or they don't like it, and for a number of reasons. Our philosophy was you have a code, a planning code and a building code. If your project meets the code, you should be allowed to build it. You may like pink and I may hate pink, but who's to say which is better. If it meets the code, then don't stand in the way of the developer. Let them go ahead and get it done. Let the market determine whether it was the right thing or not.

07-00:46:20

Meeker: So in other words, there's rule based review, which is what you would have supported, and discretionary review, which was more sort of a personal opinion layered on top of that.

07-00:46:30

Newman: Exactly.

07-00:46:32

Meeker: This is actually somewhat related to that question. But you said that you had some experience planning before joining the planning commission. But your planning was more sort of on the building code side, and planning for the expansion of a private company.

07-00:46:48

Newman: Yes.

07-00:46:51

Meeker: How did that work prepare you for the work on the planning commission and what were some new tasks and ideas that confronted you when you joined the planning commission itself? To what extent were you familiar with issues around city planning and aesthetic review and all that sort of stuff?

07-00:47:16

Newman: Well, I knew the city very well, having lived here all my life. I did have extensive meetings with the staff. I reviewed the planning code and the building code, so that I was quite familiar with what was going on. And I would just say I was certainly not an architect or was not an engineer but I knew the tempo of the city. I think all of us had a vision of what the city could be and what it needed and that we would try to help it get there. Not professional, necessarily, but as intelligent citizens dealing with day-to-day

problems or day to day programs that came before us. The route that would be taken was that a developer would have an idea of a new building or a new project. It would then be designed by that person and it would go then before the planning department and the department would review it to see whether it met the codes and so forth and if there were issues that were involved and then it would come before us. And, in a way, we were almost a judicial body dealing with each one of these projects that came up. And many of them were very controversial. But we were independent. Nobody owned us. And we tried to do what we thought was the best for the city.

07-00:49:17

Meeker: What was then your relationship as a commissioner with the staff members of the planning department and then, on the other hand, what was your relationship as a commissioner with elected officials in San Francisco?

07-00:49:35

Newman: The relationship with the staff, I insisted—I guess I’m kind of a protocol person. I don’t believe that you go underneath somebody or around somebody. Allan Jacobs was the person that you dealt with. If you had something that you wanted to talk to some staff person about, you would go through him and either he would handle it or you would do it with his approval. So we had meetings with him and the staff would come and report. But as commissioners, our relationship was ninety percent with him as the director. That was the protocol.

As far as the political thing, and this was fun. When I was appointed, I called Mayor Alioto and I said, “I’d like to come and see you, Sir.” And I said, “Now, I am going to be the president of the commission but I would clearly like you to tell me if you have any positions on any project that you would like me to represent as being your desire because I think it’s important. You are the mayor of the city.” He said, “Walter, I’ve appointed the very best people that I could find.” He said, “You people go ahead and do the best you can for this city,” and he said, “If I have anything to say, I will come down to the commission and I will say it in front of everybody.” He said, “Don’t worry about my point of view on this thing. You people do the best you can.” And that’s what we were guided by.

07-00:51:33

Meeker: It’s interesting. I would imagine sitting on the commission—maybe this is not a contradictory way of thinking, but in the sense you said you were kind of like a judicial review. What was the famous saying? Was it Roberts in his confirmation hearings saying, “As a Supreme Court Justice, I’m just there to call balls and strikes,” or something, right? So basically you’re there to more or less adjudicate the planning code, to make sure that by reviewing it, it’s implemented and so forth?

07-00:52:11

Newman: Not at all.

07-00:52:12

Meeker: No, okay.

07-00:52:12

Newman: There was a master plan for the City of San Francisco. One of the major urban design plans for the future growth of San Francisco that Jacobs and his staff put together, and I will never forget. We had an off-site. I'll never forget this, because Jacobs was so smart. He said, "Ladies and gentlemen, take an example, a horrible example. This city has been totally destroyed by an earthquake. How would you rebuild it? Where would you put the center of this city? Where would you put your ballpark?" And we spent virtually the whole day on what San Francisco could look like if we were to start all over again. And this urban design plan today is the thing that guides the development of this city. And it was a major breakthrough. So this is much more than being a judicial thing. This was really planning for the future of San Francisco. And it was adopted and it's been in effect for all these years.

07-00:53:42

Meeker: Well, that's a very modernist approach to urban design. Like the great Le Corbusier redesign of Paris, right? Like everything gets bulldozed and what are we going to build in the place of it and rational design and everything. But also, this is late 1960s in San Francisco and neighborhood groups are starting to become much more powerful. A lot of them have a different vision and their vision is let's not think about redesigning the city, let's think about preserving the city that we have. And I wonder did you have a particular opinion on that as someone who had lived in the city his whole life, basically? About your sort of competing sense about the degree to which the city needed to continue to modernize and remove old structures and build new ones versus the degree to which the city needed to maintain what made it special in the first place.

07-00:54:47

Newman: We had a very strong landmark association that we worked with very closely. But I think the motivation of our commission was to see the city grow. If the city was going to grow, we wanted to see it grow correctly and not hamper the growth, not be a detriment to what would be the natural growth of the city. People object to almost any project that comes up. Sixty percent are going to be for it or sixty percent are going to be against it and you have no idea what I went through at every meeting because people would come before you and say, "Oh, my gosh, you can't allow this thing to happen," and the other people said, "This is what has to be done." You try to be objective and to do what's in the best interests of the city. And I think more growth took place in our eight years than you've seen in a long time.

07-00:56:09

Meeker: Was there a sense among you and your fellow commissioners, being pro-growth, about what then was good desired growth and what was perhaps maybe out of control growth or growth that was without adequate foresight, for instance. Was there a differentiation amongst you and your fellow commissions about what was good growth?

07-00:56:40

Newman: Well, we had a very strong zoning ordinance here, and Bob Passmore was the zoning administrator and he was an extremely competent professional. So you can only build what is allowed to be built under the zoning code. So you couldn't just build something willy-nilly. Let's say you couldn't put a gas station next to the Bank of America building. You have to put something that conforms to the usage and to the code. So any developer would know that and when they came before you, it had to have been approved as far as the zoning was concerned or you couldn't build it. So to that extent, the development is limited into the proper direction. There is a forty-foot height limit in San Francisco. That's sacred. So it keeps the views available for the city and yet you still want some high rise structures in the city because that brings taxes and it's essential for the growth of a city. So the code directs the building but the planners also know what the proper usages are for the given site.

07-00:58:33

Meeker: So, in essence, being pro-growth within the confines of what the established codes were, that would have preserved the character of the neighborhoods and so forth.

[End Audio File 7]

Begin Audio File 8 07-06-2010.mp3

08-00:00:00

Meeker: All right. So this is tape number eight with Walter Newman. So back to the planning commission. Had you been aware of the proposal to build the Transamerica Tower prior to joining the planning commission?

08-00:00:22

Newman: No.

08-00:00:22

Meeker: Okay. So this was something that was presented new to you. I've read a little bit about the project and from what I understand, prior to the building occupying that site, there was something called the Montgomery Block, a historic building that was sort of home to a lot of artists and musicians and everything. Was that still standing or had that already been removed when the discussions about the tower were made?

08-00:00:52

Newman: That was still standing.

08-00:00:53

Meeker: That was still standing. Okay. So what were your initial feelings about the Transamerica Building when it was proposed to you on the commission?

08-00:01:04

Newman: Well, it was an extraordinary design. It had been designed, as I later found out, for a project in Los Angeles.

08-00:01:19

Meeker: Really?

08-00:01:22

Newman: It had been turned down and then they brought it up to San Francisco, and I guess Mr. Beckett, the head of Transamerica, thought that this was going to be the icon of the city. Well, it is a most unusual structure. It's truly a pyramid. Well, it even changed the skyline of the city and the professional planners were just violently opposed to it. Allan Jacobs thought it was the worst thing that could have happened to the city because it didn't conform to the usual design of the rectangular buildings that the city had had. Of course, Allan was a great advocate for building the high rises on the hills to keep the symmetry of the city. This was going to be built down on Montgomery Street.

08-00:02:31

Meeker: So he wanted the high rises built on hills. Interesting.

08-00:02:35

Newman: Yes.

08-00:02:36

Meeker: So Jacobs was not opposed by definition to high rises, he was opposed to the actual physical form of this particular high rise.

08-00:02:46

Newman: Exactly.

08-00:02:48

Meeker: Interesting.

08-00:02:53

Newman: And it was his strong recommendation that we not approve it. Well, there was lots of controversy over this thing in the newspapers and everybody felt one way or the other about it.

08-00:03:10

Meeker: When you first saw the design, I'm sure that they brought in models and drawings and everything, what was your first gut reaction to that?

08-00:03:18

Newman: Oh, I thought it was most unusual. I didn't see how it could even be made to work because the form of the building is uneconomic and it has not worked out economically very well. But design wise, it's unique. And as I said to you before, diversity is what makes a city and this is certainly the only pyramid building I've ever seen before.

08-00:03:55

Meeker: Other than the pyramids.

08-00:03:57

Newman: Yes. And so there was a big issue about the park next to the Transamerica Building and it involved closing the street. I was actually in favor of it. The thing was boiling over. We were having hearings and Joe Alioto called me and he said, "I'd like to come down and talk to the commission." "Fine." He said, "What I have to say is to be heard by everybody. It's not just for your ears." And I'll never forget. He said, "That building should be built."

08-00:04:44

Meeker: Should or shouldn't?

08-00:04:45

Newman: Should. He said, "Fifty years from now, there'll be the greatest movement to save the Transamerica Building." He said, "This building is going to be unique in San Francisco and it will be remembered." And he said, "I urge you to approve it." Well, Allan Jacobs was not happy with this but the decision was made to go ahead. And as it turned out, I think it probably was the right decision because anytime you want to look at San Francisco, there it is.

08-00:05:27

Meeker: Well, there were a whole series of issues involved. One, there was the design in and of itself, that a lot of architects and planners like to see continuity in a city, they like to see a fabric, and this interrupted the fabric, and then also there was a criticism of it, that it really belonged in Vegas. It was a piece of sort of pop culture architecture.

08-00:05:52

Newman: Oh, I heard all this stuff. Sure. I got letters. People hated it.

08-00:05:58

Meeker: Well, and then there's also the urban planning thing. It's replacing this historic building in one of the most historic parts of San Francisco that's really not even forty feet, more like twenty feet, two story buildings. The Jackson

Square area. Did you find any of the arguments against the building compelling either sort of on aesthetic grounds or planning grounds?

08-00:06:26

Newman: I did. There were very, very good arguments on both sides of the issue. And at some point you have to say it's either go or no go.

08-00:06:42

Meeker: But when you look at the arguments, it's almost predictable where people are going to line up. And it seems to me that it's predictable in the sense of is the building going to benefit them or not. So, for instance, the labor unions lined up in favor of it because it was going to mean jobs. And then the neighborhood associations nearby lined up against it because they thought it would maybe impact their views, therefore their property values. And so as a commissioner, you kind of have to work between, one, this sort of longer historical sense of what is the greater good for the city, which is people in their self-interest are making arguments on behalf of—do you see what I'm getting?

08-00:07:35

Newman: Of course.

08-00:07:36

Meeker: And so how do you deal with trying to think about the greater interests of the city while listening to the people who have very specific self-interested motivations in mind, often casting those self-interests in the greater good of the city.

08-00:07:53

Newman: What you described takes place on virtually every project that comes up. The neighborhood doesn't like it. A, it increases traffic, B, it increases parking. Then there's the other aspect that it does produce growth for the city. It's a project that's probably needed in the case of Transamerica. This is the financial district of the city. Of course, you do have Jackson Square right there, but nevertheless, it was an appropriate use for that particular site, in my opinion. It was not inappropriate. I didn't particularly care for the design of the building. It could have been a tower, it could have been another Bank of America tower and gone there, too. So take it for granted that the people on Telegraph Hill are going to object to anything that's built down there. I'd heard it all. I went through this tragedy down at Presidio with the Don Fisher Museum. It was the same story. Parking, traffic. Instead of having the magnificent building that would attract people to the site, they were able to stop it.

08-00:09:40

Meeker: One of the terms that was really popular at this point in time, and I think ultimately resulted in the passage of legislation in San Francisco was the

Manhattanization of San Francisco. Did that seem to you like a red herring or did you feel like maybe there was some validity in those arguments?

08-00:10:03

Newman: I don't think that you can stop growth. This is a dynamic city and the economics are the things that have to drive it. If people need office buildings in order to work and people are ready to invest to build office buildings. There is certainly a great story to be told about the history and preservation of the city. But I don't think you can stand in the way of progress. I'm not sure I would have voted for these towers that are going down by the bridge, because I think they're inappropriate. But, again, there is a need or they wouldn't have been built. So what you try to do is to allow growth to make place, to make it the proper growth, if you possibly can.

08-00:11:24

Meeker: So, just as an example, what do you find inappropriate about some of the towers that are going in down near the Bay Bridge?

08-00:11:31

Newman: Well, I just think they break the symmetry of the city. These tremendous towers just stand out. They don't blend into the symmetry of San Francisco. They change the outline of the city. I personally don't like them. I wouldn't mind living there because they have great views and all of that, but I would have preferred they not be there.

08-00:12:05

Meeker: Well, it's interesting. I hear you articulating a pretty well thought out perspective on what some people call smart growth, or what an individual might call their perspective on smart growth. It sounds like obviously you were an advocate of growth but there was a right and wrong way to do it.

08-00:12:28

Newman: Exactly.

08-00:12:30

Meeker: These ideas of yours, did they develop while you were on the commission or were these sort of ideas that you already had before you had even joined the commission?

08-00:12:40

Newman: Well, I think I had ideas before. I've been involved in San Francisco for so many years and I know the city very well. I think that Jacobs did help us, because he is truly a professional planner. Helped us to visualize what the city could become. So I learned a lot being on the commission but as I mentioned before, the people that were on that commission, they had no personal connections that would profit anybody that they were related to. We were all there to do the very best we could for San Francisco. We didn't want to

destroy the city in any way but we didn't want to hinder the growth of the city, because growth is important. You don't stand still. Either you go forward or you go backward.

08-00:13:55

Meeker: It's interesting, the relationship between you as chair of the commission, someone who clearly has a lot of experience in these matters but approaches it not as someone who has a master's in city planning or something, right, and then you have Allan Jacobs, who was one of the best known professional city planners in the United States. Very well respected in his craft. There's sort of the question of how you work together. But I guess more what I'm getting at is what did he bring uniquely to the table and what did you bring uniquely to the table in the conversations that you would have had with him?

08-00:14:42

Newman: Well, I would say he brought to the table vision, professionalism, knowledge of the codes and a real feeling of what was appropriate. I think what my associates and I brought were a judiciousness, a knowledge of the city. We have been residents here for many, many years. Jacobs had not been here for that long. We thought we knew what was good for San Francisco. And it usually blended with what he had, because his ideas were usually the right ideas. Dean Macris, who succeeded Allan, was much more political in his approach to planning. But Jacobs was truly a planner and only really wanted to do what he felt was right for San Francisco. So we helped him to do that by supporting him on almost anything we could. But we were independent and if we felt that he was on the wrong track, as with Transamerica, we went against him.

08-00:16:18

Meeker: So when there was a divergence of opinion, would it be possible to characterize where that opinion usually diverged? Was there a consistent theme of how the commission diverged from the executive staff?

08-00:16:38

Newman: I don't think we diverged too much. We would usually consult with them and review things. There was not a lot of argument in front of the public. And I don't think there were that many projects. In every hearing you'd have the people coming pro and the people coming con and then you would hear the director's recommendation and nine times out of ten you would accept the director's recommendation on it.

08-00:17:10

Meeker: Okay. So back to the voting for the pyramid tower. So we did a little looking in the newspaper and trying to figure out what the story was and everything. Apparently there were two votes by the commission. One would have been in June of '69 and then about six months later in November. There might have been other votes, as well. But a lot of this had to do with closing down of

Merchant Street and approving a redesign of the tower itself. It was originally skinnier and taller and then it became wider and a little shorter. It sounds like the planning commission had to approve a lot of these changes.

08-00:17:57

Newman: We did.

08-00:18:00

Meeker: The votes, at least according to the newspaper accounts, and newspapers sometimes get things wrong, showed a sort of divided commission, actually, on this. And from what I could tell, you sided with Jacobs and it seems like you're remembering things differently. So did the newspaper get it wrong or—?

08-00:18:21

Newman: Well, I voted to close Merchant Street, which was essential to building the tower. And I think I voted for the building. I'm quite sure I did. What was the vote? Was it three to two?

08-00:18:44

Meeker: Were there five or seven members on the commission?

08-00:18:48

Newman: I think there were seven.

08-00:18:49

Meeker: I think there were seven. So I think it was—

08-00:18:50

Newman: One was the chief administrative officer.

08-00:18:53

Meeker: Yes.

08-00:18:54

Newman: Mellon.

08-00:18:56

Meeker: Mellon, that's correct. And he would have been an extraordinary powerful person in the city. At that point in time, the chief administrative officer in some ways was more powerful than the mayor, right?

08-00:19:07

Newman: It was the most important position. It was just a crime that that has been abolished, because the city was well run in those days. You had a good person there and he ran the public utilities department and things ran. Now you have the Board of Supervisors running it. It's terrible.

08-00:19:31

Meeker: Yes. And the Board of Supervisors are sometimes at extremes, right?

08-00:19:34

Newman: Wacky.

08-00:19:35

Meeker: [laughter] All right, wacky.

08-00:19:38

Newman: No, I'm quite sure I voted for it.

08-00:19:40

Meeker: Okay. Obviously that's how you're remembering it, so you obviously remembered that you supported it.

08-00:19:50

Newman: Yes.

08-00:19:50

Meeker: Yes. I think there was like a four to three. It came before the commission for different facets of it and there were a couple of votes that were four to three, so there was some dissension there. Did you have much interaction with the executives of Transamerica on any of this?

08-00:20:12

Newman: Never had any. I would never allow any communication with anybody that was bringing an appeal. That, to me, was just totally prohibited. Anything that had to be said had to be said in public.

08-00:20:37

Meeker: Okay. You said Hector Rueda, who was head of the elevators union, the elevator constructing union, I wonder if he ever felt like he had a conflict of interest, being the fact that this obviously would have resulted in a great deal of work for people who he represented.

08-00:21:00

Newman: Possibly. Hector's a very bright guy and we never had any disagreements with him. Of course, he was pro-union and pro-jobs. But we never had any disagreements with him.

08-00:21:23

Meeker: When the slow growth initiative was circulating around San Francisco, did you have a specific opinion on that?

08-00:21:34

Newman: No.

08-00:21:35

Meeker: You didn't take a personal opinion either way? Okay.

08-00:21:39

Newman: We stayed out of it.

08-00:21:40

Meeker: You stayed out of it. What about as a private citizen? How did you feel about it?

08-00:21:46

Newman: I think economics has to drive growth. If there's a need for growth, it will come. If there isn't, it won't.

08-00:21:55

Meeker: Okay. So you took more sort of a *laissez-faire* approach to that sort of issue.

08-00:22:01

Newman: Yes.

08-00:22:04

Meeker: So the next thing that comes up almost immediately on the heels of the Transamerica Building is the question about building the US Steel Tower. When you were originally presented with this project, which was a little bit different—it was a tower that was actually a lot closer to the Bay Bridge. It's similar to the ones that are currently being built and it was also a port project. It would have been actually built basically on moorings in the Bay. And it was a large like 500 foot building. What did you think about this project?

08-00:22:58

Newman: Personally?

08-00:22:58

Meeker: Yes.

08-00:22:59

Newman: I thought it was terrible. I thought it was inappropriate, in the wrong location and it shouldn't be built. And I think Cyril was the president of the Port Commission at the time.

08-00:23:12

Meeker: Yes, he was. And I think that he would have helped negotiate this and brought this up to public scrutiny, as well as commission approval.

08-00:23:25

Newman: Yes.

08-00:23:27

Meeker: Did you ever have conversations with him about this?

08-00:23:28

Newman: No.

08-00:23:30

Meeker: Because it sounds like extremely rare that you two would have been on opposite sides of a particular issue.

08-00:23:36

Newman: I don't think Cyril was in favor of it.

08-00:23:41

Meeker: Do you recall what Cyril's position was?

08-00:23:43

Newman: Ben Swig was the one that wanted to build that, I believe.

08-00:23:45

Meeker: Yes, okay. But, again, so this was growth happening in San Francisco but it was—

08-00:23:53

Newman: Yes. But it was the wrong growth.

08-00:23:54

Meeker: It was the wrong growth. Okay. Let's see here. What was I going to say about this? My notes on this are rather extensive. [laughter] So what was—

08-00:24:08

Newman: [laughter] It took eight years of my life.

08-00:24:11

Meeker: Yes. So what was the relationship, to the best of your memory, that the Planning Commission had with other commissions, such as the Port Commission and the Redevelopment Commission?

08-00:24:23

Newman: We didn't have any connection.

08-00:24:27

Meeker: Oh, okay. Other than that—

08-00:24:28

Newman: Might have been with the staff. Because redevelopment was a totally separate entity and we didn't approve the redevelopment projects.

08-00:24:48

Meeker: Okay. But there was an interaction between the Port Commission on this one? No? Okay. So kind of looking back to some broader issues here about development during the late sixties into about 1975 was when you retired from the Planning Commission.

08-00:25:20

Newman: I don't even remember.

08-00:25:21

Meeker: You were on it like seven or eight years.

08-00:25:23

Newman: Eight years.

08-00:25:24

Meeker: Yes, eight years. So it was during Alioto's two terms as mayor. The skyline of San Francisco changes pretty—

08-00:25:32

Newman: Dramatically.

08-00:25:33

Meeker: —dramatically during that period of time. Just sort of reflecting upon that now that it's thirty-five, forty years, how do you feel about the work that you did on the Planning Commission?

08-00:25:48

Newman: I'm very proud of it. I'm not sure if I had been in a position of decision when the Embarcadero Center was built that I would have endorsed that, because to a large extent, it blocked the views of the city. But, of course, economically it was a driving force for that part of San Francisco. But I don't think that our commission really made any bad decision as far as the planning of San Francisco. And I think that today you have a vibrant city that has grown but not out of a reasonable level of growth. Economically sound. Unfortunately, because of the political climate in San Francisco, many companies have left the city and gone to the East Bay. I think if we'd had a different political climate, that you could have seen further development going on here but now it's slowed down a lot.

08-00:27:16

Meeker: Well, in the mid-1970s, things change quite a bit in the political events of San Francisco. You have the election of George Moscone, which was a real shift to the left. You have the emergence of district elections for a period of time, which brings more kind of neighborhood activists into city government. You have the passage of the low growth or slow growth initiative. Sometimes people talk about period of time as a reaction to what was going on in the late

sixties and early seventies when people see that downtown had a lot of influence on the big growth that was happening in San Francisco. Do you think, again, the sort of counter factials are a way that things maybe could have been done a little differently in the early seventies, so that there wasn't this kind of neighborhood backlash or was that coming anyway?

08-00:28:20

Newman:

I think it was coming. And there were a lot of red hots in a lot of these neighborhoods. They were just totally unreasonable. I had to fight one of them up at UCSF. The Haight-Ashbury group were violent. And there was a need for a new hospital up there, the Long Hospital. And the neighborhood was just opposed to it. The parking, the traffic, the same old story. And I said, "This hospital has got to be built. They need it." And we did some things politically that got the hospital built. And without it, the neighborhood wouldn't have had a good hospital. These people were irrational. It's happened in other neighborhoods, too. So I always had the feeling that we were the sane and sober people that were trying to keep a straight path in the city. And growth may be an agitating word for some people, but it does provide jobs. It keeps the city economically moving and America is a growing community. I don't endorse growth just to have growth but I don't think you can stand in the way of progress either.

08-00:30:20

Meeker:

Did you ever find yourself supporting sort of neighborhood groups on any particular initiatives? I don't know how to characterize it because I wouldn't characterize it necessarily as anti-growth. But CalTrans was going to build a freeway through Golden Gate Park and that was one of the first instances that neighborhood groups got together and said, "No more changing of our neighborhoods."

08-00:30:51

Newman:

Right.

08-00:30:53

Meeker:

Did you ever find yourself partnering with any neighborhood groups when you recognized that some growth maybe was inappropriate?

08-00:31:08

Newman:

I didn't do it personally. I endorsed that, though. I thought they were right on. And I certainly was opposed to the building of the Embarcadero Freeway. That, to me, just destroyed the nature of one of the most beautiful areas of San Francisco. And when that came down, I was the happiest guy.

08-00:31:31

Meeker:

Yes. Something good to come from the earthquake. How are we on time?

08-00:31:36

Newman: And then I'll tell you about the Gap building.

08-00:31:41

Meeker: Okay. Let's see here. What else do I want to talk about? The transition that happens in San Francisco in politics in the mid-1970s, I'd love to get your perspective on it, as someone who supported Alioto, and Alioto was very much a moderate Democrat, and interacted well with business interests in the city, to then the transition that happens in the late 1970s and you have a lot of neighborhood activists. In some ways, that period of time sort of predicts where San Francisco is now with Chris Daly and those kinds of people. I wonder, as someone who had been a leading citizen in San Francisco, how did you feel about how the city was changing at that point in time? I guess both politically and socially.

08-00:32:43

Newman: Well, I'm a moderate. I'm a registered Republican but I haven't voted Republican in a long, long time. But I don't like to see this radicalization of the city. This city where I've grown up was always a wonderful place to live. We didn't have a lot of the agitation that came with the neighborhood group. So I think San Francisco has grown but not as well as it might have grown. It is a city of neighborhoods and each neighborhood is well represented in San Francisco. But I don't have the feeling that the city is all together. I think the leadership got a little bit out of hand with the Moscone group. Dianne was a much more moderate mayor and I thought she represented my attitude toward San Francisco.

08-00:34:09

Meeker: And also your district, yes?

08-00:34:10

Newman: Yes.

08-00:34:27

Meeker: This is maybe kind of a broader question, but why do you suppose San Francisco went through that political change in the late 1970s? Did you see any particular forces influencing the development of politics as it did?

08-00:34:52

Newman: Well, the city's certainly become much more liberal in that period that you mentioned. You look back on mayor's like Feinstein, Alioto, George Christopher and some of those, they were much more moderate in their approach to things. And then things swung a lot to the left with Shelly and some of those people that were much more liberal. Whether it's been good for the city or not, I don't think the city government is nearly as good as it used to be. When the supervisors were elected at large you had a better quality of individuals.

08-00:35:42

Meeker: There's this sort of thinking about the way that politics works, especially neighborhood politics, and the way in which liberal politics works in San Francisco. I wonder the degree to which the neighborhood elected leaders, or the leaders of the neighborhood groups, really represent their constituents. Obviously Daly has been reelected a few times.

08-00:36:17

Newman: By 5,000 people.

08-00:36:18

Meeker: Yes. Yes. And so I wonder the degree to which, when you worked with a lot of these kind of neighborhood group leaders, did you get a sense that they were, in fact, sort of grassroots leaders or that they were merely the most vocal agitators in their community?

08-00:36:39

Newman: Probably the latter. The latter. And now we're going up to a new election and it's the usual thing. There are some people that are politically powerful that are running. But I think there are some other people that are probably better grass roots candidates but I think the politically powerful people are going to be elected. They wanted me to run for mayor.

08-00:37:14

Meeker: When was that?

08-00:37:16

Newman: When I was president of the museums, a group came to me and said, "Would you do it?" It's not my thing at all.

08-00:37:28

Meeker: What was their interest in having you run for mayor? What did you represent to them, do you think?

08-00:37:32

Newman: Good leadership, honesty, some vision. Just moderate.

08-00:37:49

Meeker: So your term on the Planning Commission ends. Sometimes there is crossover from one administration to another. Did you resign from the Commission or was it clear that Moscone wanted to bring his own people in?

08-00:38:09

Newman: Ellen and I were in Mexico on vacation. I got a phone call from the mayor. He said, "Thanks for your service." I said, "I'm happy. Thank you."

08-00:38:22

Meeker: Were you happy to be off the commission at that point?

08-00:38:23

Newman: Well, I didn't want to be in his commission.

08-00:38:25

Meeker: Okay. How did his commission change?

08-00:38:28

Newman: Well, it was much different than ours. I never got involved after that.

08-00:38:33

Meeker: Did you know what kind of people were on the commission? Who did he appoint?

08-00:38:38

Newman: I really didn't pay any attention.

08-00:38:40

Meeker: Okay. But clearly he was looking for a real drastic change. I've done research into some of the other commissions during that period of time and that happened across the board, from my understanding, was that he basically asked for everyone's resignation and then reappointed very few people and really brought in his own crowd.

08-00:39:05

Newman: Yes. It was interesting, though. I became the president of the museums and I got a call from him. He said, "Can you bring King Tut to San Francisco?" The King Tut Exhibition. He said, "I want it here." I said, "Well, we'll do what we can." And we did.

08-00:39:30

Meeker: So you were president of the museums? The Fine Arts Museums when he was mayor?

08-00:39:35

Newman: Um-hmm.

08-00:39:38

Meeker: Was that a city commission? No, that was a private board.

08-00:39:44

Newman: Private board.

08-00:39:44

Meeker: Yes, okay. Well, we'll talk about the museum thing more later on.

08-00:39:48

Newman: Yes, it's fun.

08-00:39:49

Meeker: But let me talk about the Redevelopment Commission a little bit in the last bit that we have here today. So you were appointed by Dianne Feinstein in 1981. The circumstances to which she became mayor and everything, of course, have been the subject of lots of movies. Do you have any recollection of what it was like to be in San Francisco at that time? San Francisco in the 1970s, there's a real kind of cultural sensibility about it. We've had the movie about the Zodiac Killer and the movie about Harvey Milk and everything like that. I guess it encapsulates a period in American history in one place, in one time. I'm wondering if you just have any sort of general reflections about what it was like to be a long-time city resident whose family has roots going back many generations in San Francisco to a period of time when the city attracted so much international attention and was going through some really difficult growing period or changes. How did it feel to you as someone who'd lived here for so long? Does that question make sense at all?

08-00:41:20

Newman: Well, I don't think we felt any major change as far as our own personal life was concerned. I think we all felt what a tragedy it was when Moscone and Harvey Milk were killed there. And, of course, everyone was so absorbed in the trial. Dianne came on and really was a very settling influence on the city. You felt that she was a strong person and that things would move forward. I think Roger Boas at the time was the chief administrative officer and Roger is an old friend of mine. He lives up the block. He was a very, very good administrator and he was moving forward with Yerba Buena. So the city was in good hands. So I don't think there was any major upheaval that we could see. Maybe it affected other people differently.

08-00:42:46

Meeker: So, yes. Because some people do talk about it as this real massive sea change happening and kind of fear—not fear of an apocalypse, not quite that drastic, but there really was a vast change happening in the city. From your perspective, it sounds like you were able to see it in a much longer historical narrative.

08-00:43:12

Newman: Yes, definitely.

08-00:43:13

Meeker: Interesting.

08-00:43:14

Newman: I think the city was changing a lot. There was certainly power swings. You saw the area down around the Castro become really very strong politically.

And Harvey Milk became a major player in the political scene of San Francisco. But that was all good. That was all part of a city, of a growing city. I don't think anybody felt that it was a cataclysm at all.

08-00:43:55

Meeker: Yes. Well, political constituencies change. Back in the 1950s, for instance, I've been told stories by politicians then and they said well, you know, once a new mayor was elected, he would go to the archbishop, he would go to the head of the Grace Cathedral and he would go to the head rabbi at Temple Emanu-El and say, "Who should be appointed to the commissions?" He would go to those sort of three religious affiliated constituency groups.

08-00:44:31

Newman: Really? I never heard that before.

08-00:44:33

Meeker: For some boards, apparently like the Board of Education before it was an elected board, apparently it was a real established yet informal requirement that the archbishop got one, the rabbi at Emanu-El got one and that the head of the trades union would get one, as well, and the chamber of commerce. And so you'd have like five people.

08-00:45:03

Newman: I didn't know that.

08-00:45:04

Meeker: But then by the 1960s and the 1970s, it begins to change a lot. You go to the African American leaders in Hunters Point, you go to the gay leaders in the Castro, you go to the leaders in Chinatown and it becomes much more sort of about racial and ethnic diversity, more or less. Did you witness that or experience that?

08-00:45:28

Newman: It didn't affect me. I wasn't aware of that particular thing. I thought most of the appointments were politically motivated. People had either given money to a candidate or had had some personal connection with the candidate.

08-00:45:51

Meeker: Well, I imagine there would have been some crossover, right? There was the negotiation that happened or something.

08-00:45:55

Newman: I guess.

08-00:45:56

Meeker: Tell me about how you got appointed to the Redevelopment Commission.

08-00:46:02

Newman: Well, I got a call from Mayor Feinstein. I had been termed out at the Planning Department. She said, "Walter, I really need you go to on the Redevelopment Commission." She said, "They need help there." And I said, "Well, Mayor, if I can help you, I'd be more than happy to." I'd never contributed anything to her. She said, "I know what a great job you did on the Planning Department." I said, "Let's do it." And so I was on that commission for ten years.

08-00:46:35

Meeker: Can you describe how the work of the Planning Commission differed from that of the Redevelopment Commission or of the Department, versus the Department.

08-00:46:45

Newman: Well, the departments were similar. Wilbur Hamilton was the director of the Redevelopment Agency. Afro-American. A powerhouse. Just a dynamic leader. A minister. Very vocal. Very smart. Ran an excellent commission. And, of course, Redevelopment is a state agency. It's really kind of a bastard agency. It's partly city and partly state. A lot of the funds come from the state. But the main effort of the Redevelopment Agency is to take distressed areas of the community and declare them as a redevelopment district and then to go in there and improve them by building new projects and improving the quality of life in that area of the city. We have many redevelopment districts in San Francisco. South of Market is one. The Fillmore is another. The Japantown was another. So actually, the financial district down where the Rockefeller Center is was a redevelopment project. So it's really one of the driving forces of the community. Lots of money there. And lots of impact on the community.

08-00:48:56

Meeker: So as a commissioner, what came across your desk? What were you supposed to do on the Redevelopment Commission and how would that have differed from your work on the Planning Commission?

08-00:49:14

Newman: Well, in Redevelopment you were dealing with different districts of the community. The Fillmore District, for example, we were redeveloping probably fifteen blocks of the city that we were building some high rises, some low rises, some commercial areas. I'll never forget the key issue on that whole Fillmore Project was getting a market, getting a supermarket in there. Dianne used every bit of persuasion she had and got Safeway to build a big store right down on Webster and Geary and that really became the anchor of the commercial development of the Fillmore. And then things built around that and then some of the high rises. And today it's a very vibrant neighborhood. Well, that was a slum before the redevelopment came in there. That's just one case in point. Yerba Buena, which was actually four blocks right in the heart of the commercial district of San Francisco, was a critical development and we were involved with that very, very heavily. The issue of

the Marriott Hotel was very controversial for a long time. So we met every week and there was always plenty of deliberations. It was very interesting.

08-00:51:20

Meeker: What was your perspective on the Marriott Hotel once you saw the designs?

08-00:51:24

Newman: Thought it was too big and ugly and blocked the views looking uptown. And we got it tailored way, way down. If you had seen what it was originally—

08-00:51:37

Meeker: Oh, really?

08-00:51:39

Newman: We brought in some architects from the Middle West to act as consultants to ratify our view that this thing was just a monster.

08-00:51:53

Meeker: So you reduced the number of stories?

08-00:51:55

Newman: The height and the bulk.

08-00:51:57

Meeker: The height and the bulk?

08-00:51:58

Newman: Dramatically. And Mr. Marriott came out. He was furious.

08-00:52:04

Meeker: What was his argument?

08-00:52:07

Newman: “We need this building here and this is it and I’m going to build it.” We said, “No, you’re not.”

08-00:52:15

Meeker: This is interesting because kind of you’re on somewhat of the other side of the equation. I guess one of the things I’m trying to do is to allow you to articulate your own personal perspective that you developed on planning and redevelopment, because you are taking a middle path on a lot of these issues, it sounds like, and you’re not constantly a hundred percent charging for growth and you don’t hold a no sign up to everything that is proposed.

08-00:52:52

Newman: I believe in growth but the right kind of growth. Growth that fits San Francisco. San Francisco’s unique. He was trying to put a blockbuster down

here. So you can argue that the Transamerica was a blockbuster, too, but it was a good blockbuster, as it turned out to be, and Marriott would have not been at all.

08-00:53:25

Meeker:

Okay. One of the debates or questions about Yerba Buena from very early on, back to the 1960s, was we consider this a blighted area. It was then the Skid Row of San Francisco. We remove the blight but then what do we put in its place? There were plans for office towers, there were plans for hotels, there was a plan for a stadium at one point in time. In the end, it ends up becoming a convention sort of tourist cultural, with the museums, center and with no appreciable office space down there. So it's really kind of tilting the city away from its position as a corporate headquarters town to its position as services and tourism and conventions. Was this pivot something that you were involved in?

08-00:54:35

Newman:

We were.

08-00:54:36

Meeker:

And how did you make that decision? How did the redevelopment group determine that San Francisco's most viable future was more in sort of convention and visitors and less as kind of a corporate headquarters?

08-00:54:56

Newman:

Well, the key to Yerba Buena was the Marriott Hotel. That was the engine of economic viability that would have made a lot of the other development possible. So the Marriott saw that as a tourist center. And, of course, it was built around the Moscone Center. We had a terrible time getting the second block, where the theater is. We could never get a tenant that wanted to come in there. It was not a very attractive area for development. We finally got a Japanese company to take the lease on that thing. It was not Sanyo—

08-00:55:58

Meeker:

Sony.

08-00:55:59

Newman:

Sony. Sony took the lease and they gave it up because they couldn't make a go of it. So that second block has never been very, very successful. But the Moscone Center has been a driving force in the city because San Francisco is basically a tourist city. That's our main enterprise.

08-00:56:30

Meeker:

Well, one of the main features of that area today, of course, is the Yerba Buena Park, the open space. Was that something that was on the table when you were on the—

08-00:56:42

Newman: No, we definitely wanted the open space there and the buildings along Third Street, too. And then, of course, when the Modern Art Museum went along on Third Street that was a bonus that was hoped for. I had hoped that the Asian Art Museum would move down there and there was discussion of that happening. But they made, I thought, a terrible mistake when they moved down to the Civic Center.

[End of Interview]

Interview #5 July 21, 2010

Begin Audio File 09 07-21-2010.mp3

09-00:00:00

Meeker: So today is the 21<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 and this is Martin Meeker interviewing Walter Newman and this is tape nine. Well, today I'd like to start out by covering your interest in fine arts. And I'd like to cover it really broadly. Start out by talking to you about your participation as a trustee for the fine arts museums of San Francisco. Then a little bit about your service on the Fine Arts Commission of San Francisco or the Arts Commission, rather, and then I'd like to wrap it up by asking you a little bit about your own personal interest in art and your own approach to collecting, because your home is populated with a very interesting array of art and I'd like to kind of get your own personal perspective on it. Well, this is actually a question, because the de Young and the Legion of Honor Museums, from what I understand, merged in 1972, yet you joined the board of trustees in 1970. Did you join either the de Young or the Legion of Honor? How did you get involved in trusteeship, leadership in San Francisco?

09-00:01:46

Newman: Well, I always had an interest in museums and I had a background in public service and I felt that the museum was a way that I could become involved in a very interesting part of San Francisco. So I was invited to join the board of the de Young Museum. And I served there as a trustee for two years and then they asked me if I would be the president of the museum, which was a major responsibility. I was very active in business at the time but I felt that this was a contribution to a very important part of San Francisco that I couldn't turn down. So I did accept the presidency of the fine arts museum and it was an extremely interesting, and I think very vital, activity for me.

One of the most important things that I did was to merge two museums that had been virtually—oh, I don't know what a good word is. They weren't enemies but they weren't friendly. Let's put it that way. They were totally separate.

09-00:03:45

Meeker: And they were perhaps competitors?

09-00:03:46

Newman: They were competitors. The Legion of Honor had really been started and subsidized by the Spreckels family, whereas the de Young Museum had been started by and supported by the de Young Family.

09-00:04:06

Meeker: Both great newspaper families. Well, Spreckels was more—

09-00:04:09

Newman: The de Young family owned *The Chronicle*.

09-00:04:11

Meeker: Yes. Spreckels was sugar.

09-00:04:12

Newman: And the Spreckels owned the sugar industry in California. There was a lot of very bad blood between the two families that date back to early San Francisco history, where a Mr. de Young had written a disparaging article about Mr. Spreckels and Mr. Spreckels came into Mr. de Young—now, this is only what I've read. But Mr. Spreckels came in and shot Mr. de Young. And the families really were competitors as well as antagonists. I guess you'd put it that way.

And the board felt that there should be one museum in San Francisco. One fine arts museum that had one director and one board. And my job was to merge them. Well, there were members of the Spreckels family on the board of the Legion and members of the de Young family on the board of the de Young Museum. And I really became friendly with both sides and said that we would like to merge the museums and have both of those people come on to the new board. And they agreed to it. And the directors agreed to it. We went forward and became the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, which continues today to consist of the two museums, the de Young and the Legion, on an equal basis, equal footing. It's worked out beautifully over these forty years.

09-00:06:24

Meeker: How did you manage to convince these two families that had generations of antagonism to throw their lot in together for the greater good of arts in San Francisco?

09-00:06:41

Newman: Well, I think I was convincing in telling them how it was going to be a much better museum scene in San Francisco if we had just the one museum. That we would have one director, that there would be considerable savings of money and that it would function much smoother if we had just the one museum and that really we were all friends in art and that we should get together and forget the past. And the two women were very, very generous about it and said, "Let's do it."

09-00:07:28

Meeker: Who were the two family representatives? Do you recall?

09-00:07:35

Newman: I'll have to give you those names later.

09-00:07:35

Meeker: Okay, that's fine. That's fine. As you said, that was forty years ago.

09-00:07:42

Newman: Well, there were two members of the Spreckels family and one member of the de Young family. And I know them but I just can't think of them at the moment.

09-00:07:49

Meeker: Sure. That's not a problem. In the process of merging two institutions together, one of the main reasons, as you said, is increased efficiency, a lower combined budget, therefore more conceivably can be done. What had to be given up? What did each museum sort of have to give up in order to increase the overall efficiencies?

09-00:08:26

Newman: Well, there were two staffs, actually. There was a de Young staff and a Legion staff. The director of the Legion retired and we consolidated and streamlined the staffs, so that instead of two staffs we just had one staff. One curator department and just a much simpler type of organization than having two running alongside of each other. And we made Ian White the director of the combined museums and he did a terrific job. And we decided that the way we would distribute the art of the two museums was to primarily place the French and European art at the Legion of Honor and the American art and more contemporary things in the de Young. Because Mrs. Spreckels, who built the Legion of Honor, built it as a model of a very famous French structure. And so it had a history of French art. And so it made sense to distribute the art that way and it's worked out very well.

09-00:10:14

Meeker: Interesting. Was this something that was negotiated at the trustee level?

09-00:10:21

Newman: Yes.

09-00:10:22

Meeker: About the redistribution of the art.

09-00:10:25

Newman: Yes, it was.

09-00:10:26

Meeker: Interesting. I imagine there must have been some dissent around that or was that—

09-00:10:31

Newman: No, really. It worked out very nicely. I guess I was kind of a neutral party on it and just felt that the end result was worth whatever we had to go through to get it done.

09-00:10:49

Meeker: Yes. I imagine there must have been some negotiations to ensure—even though there's a merger going on, I imagine there still were people who felt an allegiance to one institution or another and so perhaps there would have been concern that one would have become the lesser of the two museums. How through negotiations do you ensure that they maintain, more or less, equal footing or there's an equilibrium between the two?

09-00:11:21

Newman: The way we did that was to really have just the one board of trustees with an equivalency between the two museums. And it's very interesting. We undertook what I thought was an interesting experiment. It had a good run but in the end we decided that it wasn't worth the effort. And that was to open a small museum in downtown San Francisco in the financial district. Which we did. It operated for two or three years. It did have quite a bit of patronage but the expense of it just really wasn't worth it. So that was just something that we tried and happy that we did.

09-00:12:28

Meeker: When was that? Was that in the seventies?

09-00:12:31

Newman: Yes. In the early seventies.

09-00:12:36

Meeker: And what was the goal of opening up a third branch?

09-00:12:39

Newman: It was to give the business community and the downtown area an opportunity to see exhibits and fine art without having to come out to Golden Gate Park. Actually bring the art to downtown. So the reorganization of the museum was not nearly as difficult as you might have thought. It might be that I was able to bring the two parties together or the fact that I think everyone realized that there was good reason to do this merger.

09-00:13:29

Meeker: It's interesting. You bring up this downtown initiative in the context of merging of the two museums. Was there a notion that by establishing this third museum you would give both the museums, the staffs and perhaps the trustees that came from the different museums an opportunity to really work together on something new? To establish maybe a new identify for the museums combined?

09-00:13:59

Newman: It was just a new outlet that we felt that there was a demand for. It had been tried in other cities. We thought that the public would enjoy it and it was worth a try.

09-00:14:15

Meeker: What did you call it?

09-00:14:20

Newman: The Fine Arts Museum Downtown.

09-00:14:22

Meeker: Okay. So in some ways it sounds like it was establishing the identify of this new combined—

09-00:14:30

Newman: It was.

09-00:14:32

Meeker: Interesting. Why do you suppose that the merger happened when it did in 1972 instead of ten years before or ten years later?

09-00:10:46

Newman: Oh, that's a good question. I guess the times were right. I think the director of the Legion was ready to retire. The time was right. There were budget problems in the city and this was one way of helping to streamline what really was a duplication of museums. And there really was no reason to have two museums other than the two founders wanted to keep them separate.

09-00:15:32

Meeker: Well, although the Fine Arts Museum becomes a single institutional entity, the two museums as physical entities remained.

09-00:15:41

Newman: Absolutely. And they were on an equal footing. There was never any question that one as superior to the other.

09-00:15:49

Meeker: Was there ever any question about maybe closing one facility in favor of the other?

09-00:15:53

Newman: Never. No. No, we treasured both of them. There was, however, a difference in physical structure of the two museums and we'll get into my philosophy of museums if you want to talk about that.

09-00:16:21

Meeker: Yes, indeed.

09-00:16:22

Newman: The de Young was much more viable as an exhibition resource than the Legion. It was in Golden Gate Park, which was easily accessible. There was a limited amount of parking in the area but much more than there was up at the Legion. And there was space where you could have big exhibitions and you could get thousands of people into the building. I believe in having lots of people come to the museum. The collections of the museums are actually not at the very highest level that you might compare them to any of the other major cities in the country. We have some very fine works of art but we don't have the great collections that you'd find in New York or Chicago. And I believe that bringing traveling exhibitions to the city would induce large numbers of people to come and see works of art who might never have a chance to see it otherwise. As well as having a lot of schoolchildren come to the museum to witness what were great collections.

And during my term of office, through the auspices primarily of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, we established a relationship where blockbuster exhibitions were being mounted, primarily to visit the Metropolitan, but through Ian White's association with the Metropolitan Museum, and I did have some meetings with them, we established a relationship whereby these great blockbuster—and that's a term that may be a disparaging one—would come from New York to San Francisco being the West Coast venue. Now, people can criticize the fact that these are, oh, collections that really are almost—well, they're hyped up. They might not be the greatest collection of works of art, but they are very interesting. I believe that they were in the best interests of the public to bring them to San Francisco. Some people objected to it but I liked to see the doors swing with people coming in, because otherwise they don't have an opportunity to see these works unless they come to San Francisco. So we had this very nice relationship established with the Metropolitan.

During the course of my administration there, we brought some really tremendous shows to San Francisco. And we brought millions and millions of people there. Of course, the great experience that I had revolved around the King Tut exhibition. And that's almost a story in itself.

09-00:20:41

Meeker: Well, I want to get to the King Tut exhibition in and of itself, because I agree it is a huge story and I have a personal experience with that, as well. But this notion of blockbuster museum exhibits is really interesting and you said it might be a disparaging way to talk about it but that's the way they have come to talk about. I'm wondering if you can maybe talk about a couple examples of some of these that came in maybe before the King Tut did in 1979 in partnership with the—was there a Faberge egg one? Some of these were like

historical objets d'art kind of thing and beautiful constructions and/or collections of monarchs.

09-00:21:44

Newman: They were.

09-00:21:48

Meeker: It doesn't sound like any in particular come to mind from that period of time.

09-00:21:53

Newman: Well, I'm just trying to recall some of the blockbusters that came along. It'll take me just a second. There were treasures from Europe on several different occasions. I'm just trying to remember them. I can't recall them at the moment.

09-00:22:30

Meeker: Well, maybe we could just sort of approach it in general. I've done a little reading into sort of the museums and nonprofits and in most, if not all, cases, museums are not self-supporting through the gate fees and they're not self-supporting through the fees that people pay to actually go in to see the exhibits. I think in the most successful cases that maybe pays for about 40 to 60 percent of the museum's operating expenses is gate fees. But I understand during this period of time there's sort of a transition amongst museums to actually try to generate more operating funds from admissions.

09-00:23:25

Newman: Absolutely.

09-00:23:26

Meeker: And moving away from members and individual large benefactors and philanthropists. And simultaneously, there's also, in the sixties and seventies, an explosion of government support through the endowments.

09-00:23:48

Newman: I'll tell you a funny experience. We did bring a great show called the Treasures of the Vatican. These things can be sponsored by corporations. And because it had a Catholic background, the Gallo Family, the wine moguls in Modesto are devout Catholics and they had been supporters of art, so I thought they would be a logical sponsor. We needed a million dollar sponsorship. So we got our dog and pony act together and went to Modesto and visited with the Gallo brothers and asked them if they would sponsor the show. Well, it turns out that the national sponsor of the show was Philip Morris and the Gallo's said, "Look, as long as Philip Morris has their name above ours, we're not going to participate in this." Which was okay.

So back to square one. The chairman of the board of Chevron was also a devout Catholic and they were the largest industry in San Francisco. So I thought, "Let's go see them." Well, I got the archbishop, who I knew, to go with me. We went to see the chairman of the board of Chevron and asked them if they would sponsor the show. And he said he would. I'll never forget. I said to him, "I'm just ecstatic that you're willing to produce this show for us. How many free tickets would you like for your employees?" And his answer was, "I don't want any free tickets, Mr. Newman. I don't think that people treasure anything that they get free." He said, "I'd like my employees to be able to pay half price, because then they feel that they're really getting something in value." Anyway, Chevron did sponsor the show. It was a raving success and we went on from there.

09-00:26:30

Meeker: I wonder what role the archbishop played in moral suasion?

09-00:26:33

Newman: Well, he was part of the act. He helped me for sure.

09-00:26:40

Meeker: Maybe I can back up a little bit. Maybe you can just sort of give me an overview kind of job description of what the president of the museum did, which obviously is a much different position than the executive director of the museum, who's a museum professional.

09-00:27:02

Newman: I'm a hands-on type of executive. The president is actually the head of the board of trustees and you do have professional museum people who run the museum on a day to day basis. But the policies are set by the board. And to either a larger or a smaller extent, the president of the board is quite influential in steering the board in the direction that he hopes that they will follow. So the board was very supportive of everything that we were doing. I had a wonderful partnership with the museum director, Ian White. We did a lot of good things together.

09-00:28:07

Meeker: So obviously you're president of the board. You preside over the board meetings. You obviously deal with the governance issues, developing the overall policy of the organization. It also sounds like you participate fairly actively in raising the necessary funds in order to put on the exhibits and so forth.

09-00:28:31

Newman: Well, the museums are owned by the city. The works of art belong to the city. It's one of their major assets. But the support from the city financially doesn't begin to meet the budgets of the museums. So there's a good deal of fundraising involved to close the gap between what the city provides, what the

entry fees provide. So there is development work that has to be done along those lines that the board participates in. So I was really very, very actively involved in the museum administration.

09-00:29:26

Meeker: So when you went to do these dog and pony shows, as you described, for the major sponsors, what did that entail? How did you sell an exhibit to a possible sponsor?

09-00:29:44

Newman: Well, you knew what the works of art were. There was usually a catalogue involved. And we could present a very strong case for a company to be able to have their employees, to have their customers come there without charge. There would be great publicity for the company. Any advertising of the show would certainly involve their name. There was really not only a support of the museum show civically, as a civic gesture, but it was a good business decision to support them.

09-00:30:44

Meeker: So you were involved as a trustee for many years, from what I see, from 1970 to 1996, at which point you became an emeritus trustee. I assume you still have regular interactions with the museum. I'm sure you probably go there regularly.

09-00:31:04

Newman: I do. I always say there's nothing more past than a past president. And I always made it a policy where I was a president or chief executive to step away and then not have my shadow on my successor. And I always tried to be helpful where I could but to let the new brush sweep clean.

09-00:31:36

Meeker: Okay. Well, what I'm interested in is, given your many years of experience as a trustee for the Fine Arts Museum, if you can kind of give me a narrative sense, if you will, of how the museums changed largely from a funding perspective, keeping in mind, one, the merger, the changes and the landscape of San Francisco. How much does the city contribute to the operation of the museum and then, finally, to make the question more complex, the financial impact of a lot of these blockbuster exhibits particularly coming to de Young. So how does it change from when you first started there to when you stepped away?

09-00:32:25

Newman: Well, the city didn't vary its support very much, although I was able, when we were getting these blockbusters, to get a supplemental appropriation to enlarge the exhibition space so that we could accommodate large crowds of people. As far as fundraising was concerned, the blockbusters were a great source of revenue for us. We more than paid for the cost of bringing them out. And, of

course, I did have a background in merchandizing and I tried to play the part of being a merchant in the museum stores where a significant amount of revenue can be generated if they're properly promoted. And you'll note in the new museums that are being built that the stores play a larger role in the space allocation. So we did get a lot of financial support from our trustees and from the public and combined with the funds from the shows we were quite successful financially.

09-00:34:04

Meeker: I guess maybe I'm wondering if it's entirely—being that this was forty years maybe I'm asking too much—but from when you started in 1970, in the era, perhaps, before a lot of these blockbuster exhibits came through, I'm wondering roughly what percentage of operating expenses would have come from admissions to after King Tut or during King Tut. To what extent did that part of the operating expenses from admissions increase? I'm kind of wondering about the relative ratios of the operating expenses.

09-00:34:50

Newman: With the blockbusters?

09-00:34:52

Meeker: Yes. In other words, how did the ratios of funding the museum change over that ten to fifteen year period of time?

09-00:35:00

Newman: Well, very significant changes as the blockbusters came along because the blockbusters focused a lot more interest in the museums. I have to be perfectly honest. The museums had been there for a long time. The collections were good but they weren't very great. Suddenly we had these very interesting collections coming our way that received a lot of publicity nationally and people wanted to come and see them and they were willing to pay the fees to come. One of the things that was a great revenue producer for us is that we kept the museum open at night and companies could buy an evening for their employees or their customers. And we provided food service and bar service so that they could entertain their customers and they paid the museum for the privilege of renting the museum that night. So for these blockbusters where people were interested enough in wanting to have a night, there was a lot of revenue that came to the museum that way, too. So you had the daytime people coming and paying the entry fees and then the evening from people renting the museum.

09-00:36:43

Meeker: It's a pretty remarkable story. The way that you're telling it, during this period of time that you're a trustee at the fine arts museums, you have kind of the emergence of the blockbuster exhibits. You have the museum store beginning to come into its own as a source of income for the museum. You have turning the museum into kind of, for lack of a better word, nightclub space in the

evening. These are all things that are very present today, forty years later, and very significant parts of the museum's life. Where did these ideas come from? Were these happening all over the country or were they coming from specific people and places?

09-00:37:41

Newman:

I think there was a demand for it and we satisfied the demand. We were looking for ways to raise revenue and this was a simple way to do it. We had the space, we had the show and just made it available to people. So I think working with the staff we came up with these ideas and we executed them.

09-00:38:15

Meeker:

In a lot of other arts institutions, the symphony or the opera, there's this sort of constant tension between sort of serious art that the academics and maybe the curators or the directors are really personally interested in promoting. So maybe the John Adams operas or the sort of atonal operas, contemporary operas, that sort of stuff that people whose profession is opera and music are really interested in. And then there's Puccini and then there's Verdi that really bring in the crowds. And there's a constant tension between what's going to appeal to the masses and help support the finance of the museum and then what is just making sure that the arts institution is really dedicated to serious art. I'm wondering the degree to which you encountered this as a trustee and how you managed this.

09-00:39:31

Newman:

Well, it's a good question. I was subject to a good deal of criticism for sort of being so interested in having the blockbusters come to San Francisco because the art professionals didn't believe that they were really true fine arts and the museums are truly fine arts museums. And many people felt that we should be concentrating on our own collections showing the things that were really fine art that we owned. But I had to be perfectly honest. I didn't think that those exhibitions would draw the very large numbers of people that these blockbusters would bring. And how do you ever get people to feel comfortable going to a museum if they don't go there once or twice to see something. Get your feet wet, as it were, and feel comfortable that that's a place that is interesting and that it isn't strictly an academic experience, that it could be fun and that you're going to see worldly recognized pieces in an atmosphere that is not fearsome and is not stodgy and could be fun. And it worked.

09-00:41:34

Meeker:

So one of the motivations, obviously, then, was to get people who may not go to museums in through this, yet the after they're in the door they might be exposed to more of the conventional fine arts.

09-00:41:52

Newman: Exactly. And they also might become members of the museum, which is a major source of income. I remember when we brought King Tut here. Our membership was over 80,000. And that's significant.

09-00:42:12

Meeker: What had it been roughly when you started?

09-00:42:16

Newman: Oh, I don't know. Maybe ten or fifteen, something like that.

09-00:42:19

Meeker: So a many fold increase.

09-00:42:21

Newman: Yes.

09-00:42:22

Meeker: Then another thing about the blockbusters is that there's this constant pressure to have yet another one because once a cultural institution gets used to a certain level of income, which often will result in greater ambitions, perhaps a larger number of staff, etcetera, then you constantly have to stage these massive exhibits. And there's only a few King Tut's in the world, right? So how did you, as trustee, deal with the pressure associated with having to sort of find the next blockbuster? How did you sort of think about what actually might appeal in that way?

09-00:43:19

Newman: We didn't actually create the blockbusters. Other people did and we participated in them. So they were there for us to choose. If a major show was coming to New York or to Chicago, we would see if we could get that show to come to San Francisco. We didn't have the resources here to create the blockbuster exhibitions. That had to be done elsewhere.

09-00:43:59

Meeker: So I guess it's similar to the way that Broadway works. Broadway tests out whether a musical is going to be a blockbuster or not and then the people who book them here already know if it has an interest or if it's good.

09-00:44:15

Newman: Yes. You kind of get on the bandwagon.

09-00:44:16

Meeker: Okay, all right. But it still does involve a substantial amount of fundraising to bring it?

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Newman: Oh, definitely. Once you make the decision that you're going to do it, it involves a lot of production.

09-00:44:30

Meeker: So my office did a pretty substantial interview project on MOMA in advance of—I can't remember what anniversary. I guess their seventy-fifth anniversary probably. I didn't participate in that project in general but I spoke with some of our interviewers who did do some of the interviewing and they said that one of MOMA's challenges over the years has been retaining good directors for a long period of time. They've had a lot of turnover in that position. There's sort of a history of a bit of acrimony between their trustees and the position of the director. And they then pointed out to me that the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco seem to be the opposite, that they've had a few really long-term directors that appear to have had a good relationship, like you had mentioned between you and Ian White, between the trustees and the director of the museum. And I'm wondering if you can just give a sense about why that is. Why was it that the Fine Arts Museums typically have had a longer, thus presumably more productive, relationship between the trustees and the director?

09-00:45:57

Newman: Well, I don't know anything about the relationship at MOMA. MOMA is not a city owned museum. It's a privately funded museum, whereas the Fine Arts Museum is a public institution. And the city administration has every right to look at the board of trustees to see that its property is properly managed and run. The director serves at the pleasure of the board and in the case of Ian White, we had a very fine professional. He was very cooperative, very understanding. I think I only had one disagreement in all the years that Ian and I worked together, and that was that the museum was getting to be such a big enterprise that it was very difficult, in my opinion, to have one person as the chief executive officer.

09-00:47:34

Meeker: As the director or president of the trustees?

09-00:47:37

Newman: No, one director of the museum. And we were able to have one of the big consulting firms volunteer to do a consulting job on the management of the museums. And the conclusion of the consulting effort was that you have a museum person who is primarily concerned with the art of the museum and not with the day-to-day operations of the staff and the management of the guards and the janitorial work and the construction and so forth and that there should be like a general manager.

09-00:48:45

Meeker: Or chief administrative officer.

09-00:48:46

Newman: Or chief administrative officer to work alongside the museum and let the museum person deal with the exhibitions and with the art and let the CAO deal with the day to day problems. And that's what we did. And it was very difficult for Ian to accept because the director had always been the director of everything. But we insisted. I don't think it was very successful to have another person in there. And eventually it went back to just having one director and having a subordinate person to do the day-to-day activity.

09-00:49:49

Meeker: Did Ian White stick around for that whole process?

09-00:49:52

Newman: He did but it was difficult. Because really you were kind of sharing the responsibilities. That was not something that had been done before.

09-00:50:06

Meeker: But eventually then it sounds like the trustees determined that this was an experiment that didn't necessarily work and they went to a different model.

09-00:50:17

Newman: Exactly. Right.

09-00:50:18

Meeker: That, in and of itself, is fairly interesting. It shows a willingness, I guess both on the staff side, as well as on the trustee side, to try things out but also to maybe admit that things weren't going as well as perhaps they did. Other institutions aren't willing necessarily to admit their mistakes.

09-00:50:44

Newman: Well, I'm not sure it was a mistake. It might have been a personality thing. Because there was some feeling that the nitty-gritty things weren't getting done as promptly as they might have been and so forth.

09-00:51:01

Meeker: I want to talk about the King Tut exhibit. One thing I wanted to ask about before I change the tape is the buildings themselves. After your period as a trustee, the de Young was torn down and rebuilt and the Legion of Honor was gutted and rebuilt. I wonder, during your period of leadership, what the concerns with the buildings were. I mean, I know the de Young dated back to the last century. I guess it would have been the midwinter exhibition or something like that. And the Legion of Honor also was gray. Did you ever have any discussions during your period of time about completely needing to retrofit or perhaps dismantle and rebuilt these Victorian era structures?

09-00:52:20

Newman: I don't think that we felt it was within our purview to try to build a new museum. It was a city function. The city owned the building. Of course, we didn't have the funds to do it. We knew that it had to be seismically upgraded and that was going to be the major decision. And all I can say is that the people who did succeed me, primarily Mrs. Wilsey, who has been the president of the board for the last ten years, decided that she would go out and raise the money and she did. I think it was \$140 million. I never could have done that. But she just felt that seismically upgrading that old building was just not going to happen. I can do nothing but admire what she did.

09-00:53:32

Meeker: Why do you say you could have never done that?

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Newman: Well, she has more convincing ways than I do. She was just nonstop and just made anybody who could make major gifts give it. I'm just not that much of a fundraiser, I guess.

09-00:54:00

Meeker: Yes. It is interesting now, from the vantage point of 2010, the Legion of Honor is the same building although it's been seismically—

09-00:54:11

Newman: A lot of money's been spent on it.

09-00:54:11

Meeker: A lot of money's been spent on that. And the de Young is a completely new and different building. How do you feel about the balance between the two museums today based on your many years of looking at them?

09-00:54:28

Newman: I really enjoy the de Young. I think they did an excellent job of designing it. It really works. It's a pleasant place to go. I think it fits into the museum picture beautifully. I have one major regret and that is that the Asian art museum, which used to be an adjunct of the de Young, and was adjacent to the de Young, decided that they were going to leave Golden Gate Park. I think it was largely motivated by the fact that the Asian Art Museum felt that they—and they had a great, great collection of wonderful Asian art. But they felt that they should stand alone rather than be associated with the de Young. And then they decided to go down to the civic center. I always felt that when the new de Young was built, that a new Asian Art Museum could have been built there, too, and you would have had just another attraction at Golden Gate Park. That's my own personal feeling. Would have been a better place to have the museum than in the civic center, where people have to make a specific effort to go there to see Asian art, where they could come to Golden Gate Park to

see Asian art in the morning and see more modern art in the afternoon. It could be just a whole museum experience out there.

09-00:56:22

Meeker: Was the Asian Art Museum part of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco?

09-00:56:27

Newman: It was a building that had its own director but it had joined the de Young.

09-00:56:36

Meeker: Physically?

09-00:56:37

Newman: So it was connected.

09-00:56:40

Meeker: Yes, yes. But it was never institutionally part of the Fine Arts Museums?

09-00:56:43

Newman: No, no it was not.

09-00:56:44

Meeker: Yet it was owned by San Francisco?

09-00:56:47

Newman: Yes.

09-00:56:49

Meeker: Well, that then brings up the question of during the period of time in particular it was attached to de Young, was there ever any question about merging the Asian Art Museum in with the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco?

09-00:57:05

Newman: I don't think we could. The Asian Art Museum Board was very protective of their art and of their institution and the de Young was, too. We were good neighbors. I'm quite sure the de Young did administer the building. We provided the guards and the janitorial and that thing. But they had their own director, their own staff, and their own board. And they wanted to be independent. And I can understand it. But from the public's point of view I think it would have been better if they had stayed there.

09-00:57:53

Meeker: So if I'm reading between the lines correctly it sounds like maybe amongst the Fine Arts Museums trustees there was perhaps a wish that the Asian Art Museum would express interest in joining?

09-00:58:10

Newman: Not joining but staying.

09-00:58:12

Meeker: Staying.

09-00:58:12

Newman: Staying there maybe independently. There was a plot of land where they could have built their own building. They did instead take the old central library building downtown, spent a lot of money in what I don't think was the most efficient method of showing those beautiful things.

09-00:58:41

Meeker: I wonder about MOMA, also. What was the relationship between MOMA and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco? I know that of course they are modern art but both the Legion of Honor and the de Young do have some significant modern art collections.

09-00:59:00

Newman: They do. That has only really taken place, I would guess, in about the last twenty years.

09-00:59:08

Meeker: What has?

09-00:59:10

Newman: Adding modern art to de Young and the Legion. Up until some twenty or twenty-five years ago it was pretty much classical art all the way through. There was never any intention of trying to distract from the MOMA. There really has never been any relationship between the two.

09-00:59:38

Meeker: Well, from what I understand, when there were some issues that happened at MOMA, there were a lot of MOMA board members who eventually came over to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

09-00:59:53

Newman: I don't know about that.

09-00:59:55

Meeker: That may not have been during your period of time. I don't know.

09-00:59:57

Newman: I don't think it was.

09-00:59:58

Meeker: What was that?

09-00:59:59

Newman: I don't think it was.

09-00:60:03

Meeker: Okay. That would have maybe been in the 1980s or something.

09-00:60:13

Newman: Could be.

09-00:60:13

Meeker: After Ian White retired. So during your period of leadership you don't recall any substantial—

09-00:60:21

Newman: We never had any connections with MOMA. They were private and we were public.

09-00:60:28

Meeker: But when the Fine Arts Museum started to collect more modern art, was there any concern amongst the Fine Arts Museums trustees that you would be seen as sort of a carpetbagger in the modern art community by the MOMA board?

09-00:60:47

Newman: I don't think so. I think the board felt that we were showing art and that we should expand the collection into a more modern style.

[End Audio File 9]

Begin Audio File 10 07-21-2010.mp3

10-00:00:00

Meeker: Okay. So we are on tape number ten at this point. So arguably the most important and certainly the most popular exhibit that was brought to the de Young during your service as a trustee was the King Tut exhibit, which came to San Francisco in the summer of 1979. And we've maybe talked about it a little bit. But I think rather than me kind of ask questions about it, I'd like to just sort of hear your story about it from beginning through end and then I'll ask some follow-up questions about it.

10-00:00:47

Newman: Okay. Well, a very interesting thing occurred. In the course of acquisitions, the museum had purchased a stela, a piece of sculpture from a Swiss dealer. And I think we paid \$200,000 for it, something like that. And it received some press and we received a letter from the British Museum to the effect that the piece that we had purchased was stolen, that it was stolen from their digs in Sakkara in Egypt. Well, when we found out that it had been stolen, we

contacted the dealer and he said, "Well, I have all the documents and they've all been authorized and so forth. But if it has been stolen, we don't want you to have it and we'll give you your money back and you can keep it." Well, we decided at that point, between Ian and the board, that we didn't want to have anything stolen stay in our museum. So we contacted the Egyptian authorities to see if they would be interested in having the piece sent back to them, because it really was part of their history. And they were overwhelmed. No one had ever sent anything back to them. So they said they would love to have it. And we were able to get TWA to give us two seats to go to Cairo. And the curator and the piece went in the two seats. And when they got to Cairo, it was as though American had just sent over billions of dollars because they had the press and TV and everybody there to welcome this piece back to Egypt. And San Francisco became really the darling of Egypt because nobody had ever done anything so generous as to give a piece back to the country of its origin.

Well, that was something that was filed away. I received a call from the mayor of San Francisco in which he said that this King Tut exhibition was making its way around the United States and San Francisco was not on the venue and he would like to have us get it. So that was almost a command. And we tried to plan how that could be done. Well, we organized an expedition which involved Ian White, Cyril Magnin, who was politically very astute and who knew President Carter pretty well, and we contacted Stanford Research, who were doing a lot of excavation work in Egypt at the time to get advice on how we could go to Egypt and get involved with convincing them to have King Tut come to San Francisco. And Stanford Research was very helpful. The first thing they told me was when you get down there and you start to negotiate with these people, do not leave without the deal. If you leave and try to communicate by phone or by mail, you'll never get it done. You have to do the thing while you're there.

Anyway, we contacted the Egyptian authorities. Mr. Magnin even called President Carter. He might have put in a good word for us. I never knew that for sure. But we did make an appointment with the Egyptian antiquities people to come and see them in Cairo. And to get to Cairo you have to go through New York. And the show was being shown in Chicago at the time. And I was in a hotel in New York and turned on the news and the show was just closing in Chicago and there were lines of thousands of people waiting to get into the King Tut show in Chicago and they closed the doors and these people were turned away. And I thought to myself, "That's just terrible." People came from all over the Middle West to see it and they couldn't see it. Maybe they opened it the next day. I don't know. But in any event, I thought to myself, "Well, why can't people make a reservation so that they could have a ticket just like they would if they went to a football game or to a show or something else?" Anyway, I didn't know. I just filed that away.

So we did go to Cairo and we met with the Egyptian authorities. I had some checks in my pocket which I planned to use if it was necessary to convince them to bring the show to San Francisco.

10-00:07:57

Meeker:

The checks, were they a deposit or were they for the—

10-00:07:59

Newman:

They were from the museum. It would be used as good faith money. In any event, we had concluded that we could guarantee the Egyptians a million dollars if they would get the show come to San Francisco because we knew how successful it was and what it would mean. And so we sat down and started to negotiate. Well, the whole route of the King Tut show had been made months and months in advance. We were kind of coming in to try to insert San Francisco into an already scheduled program. But I said, "We're prepared to guarantee you a million dollars if you bring the show there for six weeks." And the Egyptians were very polite to us and they remembered the fact that San Francisco had sent back a piece of masonry to them and that we deserved some special treatment. There were different things that came up in the course of the negotiation and the people at Stanford Research said you'll have three different sessions with them. Each time they're going to ask us something different. But make it happen. So Ian and I brought a typewriter along with us and every evening we would go back to our hotel and we would type up the contract again, putting in the changes, and the next day we would come back and it would be reviewed and then they would put something else into it and the third time they said okay, the deal is done.

10-00:10:29

Meeker:

What were some of the main conditions in the contract that maybe were different than—

10-00:10:32

Newman:

Oh, they were just minor things that had to be changed. The dates had been set. They found a period when they could get it to San Francisco. It involved having some of their staff come to San Francisco. And in that connection, the person who was responsible—they were very nice. They took us all around to Cairo to show us the antiquities and the pyramids and so forth. And we met a young man who was in charge of the pyramids at the time. He was the head of the antiquities department for the pyramids. His name was Zahi Hawass and today Zahi Hawass is the head of all Egyptian antiquities and probably as well known as any Egyptian has ever been. He's on the National Geographic show. He heads up all the excavations. You always see his picture in the paper with new discoveries of mummies and burial grounds and so forth. Anyway, Zahi came to San Francisco with the show and he and I have become bosom friends. I've been to Egypt on three occasions with my wife and Zahi has always been just the most wonderful hospitable person you could know.

Anyway, we came back from Egypt on that trip. Oh, I have to tell you one important thing. After we had concluded all our negotiations with the Egyptians in Cairo, the head of antiquities in Cairo said, "Now, there's one minor thing that you have to have. That is, the American ambassador has to approve this coming to San Francisco." Well, we thought that's pro forma. So we went over to the American embassy and went to see the ambassador and said, "We represent San Francisco. We need your authorization to have the show come." Well, he said, "I can't do that." He said, "There are four or five other cities here in Cairo that are trying to get that show and I cannot authorize that for you. Sorry." Well, we said, "We have to have it." He said, "I'm sorry. That's it." Well, we were just crestfallen. Here we've spent three days negotiating and this ambassador was saying that we couldn't get it done. We went back to our hotel and Ian White and I were ready to commit suicide. And Mr. Magnin was there and he was such a wise man. And he said, "Now, wait a minute. He said he would not approve San Francisco having it but he didn't say he would disapprove it, did he?" I said, "No, he didn't." He said, "Let's go back and see if he doesn't disapprove it." So we went back to the embassy and we said to the ambassador, "Sir, you didn't approve it but would you say you didn't disapprove it?" He said, "I don't disapprove it at all." He said, "That's fine." We went back to the Egyptians and said, "The ambassador doesn't disapprove it." They said, "Fine. Sign here." And that was it.

10-00:14:46

Meeker: He just couldn't play favorites.

10-00:14:50

Newman: Couldn't play favorites. It was just a matter of flipping a word that changed the whole thing. I never forgot that.

10-00:15:02

Meeker: When did these negotiations happen? I know that it opens around May or June 1979. How far in advance was this?

10-00:15:13

Newman: About eight months.

10-00:15:15

Meeker: So that is an amazingly short period of time. I know enough about the museum world to know that generally these kinds of things are planned two to three years in advance now.

10-00:15:26

Newman: I know. I don't even remember where it came from. It just came from another city.

10-00:15:35

Meeker: But still, eight months for the museum to prepare for what would be its largest exhibition ever.

10-00:15:40

Newman: Right.

10-00:15:43

Meeker: So how does that happen?

10-00:15:46

Newman: I don't know. It just happened. I had guaranteed them a million dollars. I think I gave them a check for a hundred thousand as a deposit.

10-00:15:56

Meeker: So the million dollars, did you promise them a percentage of admission fees or just a check at the beginning or the end?

10-00:16:10

Newman: At the end. I said we've done the calculations and we're prepared to guarantee you a million dollars. I did sign a check for a million dollars and sent it to them. But when we got home I called a friend of mine who knew the technology of computers at the time and I said, "Can we make it possible for people to make a reservation to come to see the show?" We calculated that we could take 600 people an hour through the show. And there were just so many hours in the day. So we knew how many days it was going to be there, so we would just put slots of 600 people each hour and sell tickets in advance. And he said no problem at all. Set it up. You could make reservations by phone. And that was the first time that people had ever had an opportunity to go to an exhibition and know when they were going to go and know when they were going to get in.

10-00:17:33

Meeker: Like buying a show ticket, as you said.

10-00:17:36

Newman: Exactly. So we had the largest attendance of any city in the world because of that. We had a 1,200,000 people go through that exhibition in six weeks.

10-00:17:51

Meeker: So you were able to maximize. I imagine it was sold out, yes?

10-00:17:55

Newman: Yes. Every hour.

10-00:17:58

Meeker: Every hour during the period of time that it was open.

10-00:18:00

Newman: Yes. And then, of course, we were selling the museum at night to companies that wanted to have their people come there.

10-00:18:10

Meeker: I imagine you would have expanded the hours the museum was open and perhaps the days that it was open, as well?

10-00:18:17

Newman: We did. And San Francisco State did a study of the effect to the city of having the King Tut show come to San Francisco and they estimated that it brought over a hundred million dollars of new business to the city. People came from as far north as Seattle and from all over Idaho and Nevada to see this show. It was something that everybody had to see.

10-00:19:04

Meeker: I imagine there were some of those Midwesterners who never got a chance to see it in Chicago came out to California.

10-00:19:10

Newman: Right. Of course, the big attraction in the show was the death mask of King Tut. Gold mask at the end of the show. And one of the things that has always been a phobia with me about museums, and I still see it in so many—the labels on the works of art are always so small that you almost have to get up next to it to read what it says. What's the name of it, who the artist was and so forth. So I insisted on this King Tut show that we have huge labels that hung down from the ceiling so that people could see where they wanted to go. We you had these huge crowds in there. And it facilitated people knowing exactly what they were going to see and where it was located and it made a huge difference in the show. And the revenue from the stores, of course, was huge. People wanted to buy something that was a reminiscence of King Tut. It all came back to the museum. So we ended up netting, after giving a million dollars to the Egyptians, over two million for the museum. And Zahi was delighted when the whole thing wound up. We've had a very, very pleasant relationship ever since that time.

And it was interesting. Just a few months ago, we read in the paper that Zahi, who's now the authority on everything Egyptian, was coming to the city to speak down at Hearst Hall. So Ellen and I just bought a couple of tickets way up in the balcony. We were sitting there and he's lecturing on the newest finds in Egypt and so forth. The place is sold out. And he gets down to the end and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, there's one person in San Francisco that you should hold in reverence because he was the one who first established giving back something to a country that it really belonged to and that's Walter Newman. And if you ever forget him, it'll be a terrible thing." And here we were sitting up in the audience. We couldn't believe it. Well, we went down after his talk and he was autographing books. He's always writing a new

book. It was really like old home week. I hadn't seen him in thirty years. We had dinner at the Egyptian consulate and I have a picture of Zahi. We had just a great relationship. My brother-in-law went to Egypt a few months ago. Zahi took care of them. It's just great. If you ever go to Egypt, I can get you the royal treatment.

10-00:22:43

Meeker: Tell me about when you went there with Ellen, your wife. What was your tour like? What did you get to see that ordinary tours wouldn't have had access to?

10-00:22:53

Newman: Well, they saw that we were treated like royalty there. We were in Luxor the last night before we were going to leave and they said, "Now, we have something special for you." We didn't know what it was going to be. We were staying in sort of the government house there. And they said, "We'll pick you up about six o'clock in the evening." And they came along and the head of the antiquities department and one or two other officials were there. And we didn't know where we were going and they drove us to the Temple at Karnak. The Temple at Karnak is one of the most historic and most beautiful of places that you will ever see. It was then closed to the public. It was dark. It was closed for us. And they took us and we walked through and they were describing this magnificent place. It was just sundown. And this magnificent building, we were strolling through it. By the time we got maybe several hundred yards into the building, it's huge, they suddenly turned on all the lights and there they had set up a banquet for us. They said, "This is the first time there's ever been a banquet held in the Temple at Karnak."

10-00:24:46

Meeker: Wow. That's remarkable.

10-00:24:59

Newman: There's an obelisk there. There's an obelisk in the Place de la Concorde in Paris that's the sister of this particular one and it's by a gorgeous lake right in the Temple at Karnak. We had this delightful dinner just for us and then the next day we left for San Francisco. But I will never forget that.

10-00:25:23

Meeker: Wow. That must be very gratifying. Quite an experience.

10-00:25:28

Newman: Well, we had such a nice relationship. It was all kind of a handshake thing. All because of our returning that piece to them originally.

10-00:23:39

Meeker: Well, that was something that museums weren't doing now and it's something that museums today even have qualms with doing. How was it that you arrived at the decision that that was the right thing to do rather than keep it?

10-00:25:59

Newman: Because that's the way I am. Either you're honest and fair in your dealings—or maybe I learned it in the Boy Scouts. I don't know. But you have to live with yourself and if something is not clean and right you shouldn't be associated with it. It sounds sort of religious but it isn't. There's only one way to do things and that's the right way. I'm used to doing business on a handshake. Your word is your bond kind of thing. Here this is a tainted piece that was in a public place that you would have to explain that it was stolen. You look at the Elgin Marbles. It's the same thing. I'm glad I don't have to make that decision if I was in England and return those to Greece.

10-00:27:15

Meeker: Well, the de Young has had a fairly extensive collection of African and Oceanic art, primitive art. I wonder if when you were determining this policy to return it if the question was brought up, well, what if it's determined that a large number of our pieces that we hold, perhaps of primitive art, are going to be reclaimed by the societies from which they came? Was there a concern about establishing a precedent that might result in the disappearance of a lot of art?

10-00:27:53

Newman: I think if something is sold and you buy it on a legitimate basis, the mistake probably could have been made by the people who sold it to you. If it was a stolen piece and then they sold it, I would have a hard time in owning it.

10-00:28:20

Meeker: So the question was really a matter of theft?

10-00:28:23

Newman: Exactly.

10-00:28:27

Meeker: This question might certainly require some speculation on your part. But I had mentioned that when I was nine years old I went to the exhibit. You mention the death mask and the sarcophagus. I can close my eyes and I can see it. I remember the contours of it and the fact that there were some little flaws in it and everything, little pieces of gems that were missing here and there. But I remember it so vividly. I must have stood in that room for as long as the security guards would let me just gazing at it because it was such a remarkable piece, as well as many others. But I wonder why do you suppose there was so much interest in the King Tut exhibit?

10-00:29:21

Newman: Well, in the de Young Museum, as long as I've been in San Francisco, there's always been a mummy. For whatever reason, it's always been one of the most visited pieces that people want to look at. There is a certain mystery to Egypt and the fact that that society goes back 2,500 years BC. And that the

mummification has always been something that's intrigued people. The pyramids are something that you don't see any other place in the world. There was always a wealth of gold and precious metals down there. And there's a mystery that intrigues people about King Tut. And the fact that it was discovered. There was such a world excitement about it and here that was 1,500 years BC. That's forever. And it was beautifully preserved and here it was all coming to San Francisco. Wherever it went, it just draws huge crowds. Even today, I don't mind saying this to have it repeated, they just brought a King Tut exhibition to San Francisco, which to me is almost fraudulent. Egypt is a very poor country and the one thing that it has to sell is this history, this mystery and all of the lore that went with the pharaohs and so forth and Moses and all of that. Well, it's—

10-00:32:02

Meeker: You were talking about the contemporary King Tut exhibit that just came.

10-00:32:06

Newman: Oh, yes. The King Tut show that came here was an effort by Egypt to really raise huge amounts of money from organizing an exhibition. It was programmed with a professional exhibition company from Denver and all of the show details, all of the displays, all of the merchandise in the store, all of the staff that was selling in the King Tut stores in the museums, were all part of this exhibition company. Nothing, or at least very little, came to the museum in the way of income. This was strictly a money making proposition for Egypt and for the exhibition company. If I had been in charge, I would not have accepted that show. When we did it, it was for Egypt and for San Francisco. Everything was open and aboveboard. This, to me, was just strictly commercial.

10-00:33:45

Meeker: The long history of Egypt, of course, is intriguing. There was so much mystery associated with it. It was so long ago. It was one of the oldest civilizations on the planet. But as a historian, I think this came around to the United States in the late 1970s when Egypt is arguably part of the Middle East and, of course, you begin the 1970s and end the 1960s, really, with the war between Egypt and Israel. The 1970s, of course, has the oil embargo and everything, which did not specifically involve Egypt but involved OPEC countries. Then you end the 1970s on a note of hopefulness with the Camp David Accords and the beginning of some sort of relationship between Egypt and Israel. I wonder if looking back on that period of time, if you think that some of the interest in this exhibit, some of the extreme interest, rabid interest, if you will, had something to do with the evolving relationship between Egypt and the West at that point in time.

10-00:35:13

Newman: I really don't think so. I think the people just are intrigued with mummies and with pharaohs and with pyramids and this King Tut thing had so much press

and how it was discovered. It really opened up a whole section of the Valley of the Kings that they're still exploring now. Everybody's interested when they see Zahi coming up with a new necropolis and he was saying at this talk the other evening here that he thinks that he is going to find the Tomb of Cleopatra. That's going to be his next big one. He's always got something going on.

10-00:36:14

Meeker: Well, he's probably hunting, on the trail of it, I imagine, right?

10-00:36:18

Newman: Oh, he's always trying to find something going. He's a great promoter for himself.

10-00:36:24

Meeker: So in addition to the \$100,000 and the million dollars that would be paid after all the admissions were received, the museum had to be refurbished. There had to be new climate controls. I imagine there had to be a lot of exhibit cases and artisans and carpenters and everything brought in to improve the site and build the exhibition space within the museum. And clearly that would require a lot of investment. How did you go about getting sponsors for this exhibit in such a short period of time?

10-00:37:03

Newman: For King Tut?

10-00:37:04

Meeker: Yes. Or did you not need any sponsors?

10-00:37:06

Newman: I don't think we had a sponsor.

10-00:37:08

Meeker: Okay. Was that just because you were able to do ticket sales in advance?

10-00:37:13

Newman: Yes. We didn't have to come up with anything for that, I don't believe. But almost every evening was subscribed by a company. And we charged \$25,000 a night. It was a gold mine for everybody.

10-00:37:40

Meeker: Yes, that's amazing. A lot of the exhibits, of course, require a lot of PR and publicity and marketing around it. To what extent did the museum have to invest in that?

10-00:37:55

Newman: We didn't have to do anything. One thing that I did, and it was a very smart thing. I realized the immensity of this project and I knew that the museum staff really wasn't qualified to handle a million people. We'd never had anything like that. But I contacted Bill Graham and said, "How are we going to do this?" And he said, "I've got the person for you." And her name was Rita Barela. And Rita was an employee of Bill Graham's, but she'd been an assistant producer in the motion picture industry. She was just all over the place in terms of managing the details of getting people through the exhibition and organizing the volunteer people in the museum world who all volunteered to do whatever was necessary. And Rita has become one of the great event producers in San Francisco. And it was interesting. She met our deputy director of the museums and they fell in love and he got a divorce and married her.

10-00:39:42

Meeker: What were some of the innovations that she brought in to manage the flow of people?

10-00:39:49

Newman: Well, crowd control. She arranged to have the people moved from one area to the other so that the whole flow was very smooth. And she ran the staff. Not the guards or the museum staff but there were all kinds of volunteer groups that were helping. She was just the point person on the whole project. Did a great job.

10-00:40:33

Meeker: And just sort of wrapping up the King Tut discussion. What sort of long-term impact do you think that that exhibit had on both the Fine Arts Museums, the de Young, but also on the sort of arts scene in San Francisco or maybe the museum scene in San Francisco?

10-00:41:00

Newman: Well, as I said before, I love to see the doors swing and I'm sure a lot of people like you saw the museum maybe for the first time.

10-00:41:13

Meeker: I think it was maybe the first time I ever went to a museum period.

10-00:41:16

Newman: Yes, exactly. And classes from all the different schools came out there to see it. It was an event more than it was a museum thing of any particular artistic value. But it was memorable because it brought history of one of the most ancient civilizations right to your front door and you had a chance to see the tomb, the sarcophagus and you saw the death mask and the statute of Nefertiti and all these wonderful things that date back thousands of years. There's a mystery to that. And it brought a great civilization here.

10-00:42:22

Meeker: Was there an effort by the museum to kind of beef up the more cerebral side of it, the content? Bring in historians to give public talks about the history associated with it?

10-00:42:36

Newman: We did. We did have some valuable presentations. But by and large, people just wanted to come and see it. It's unforgettable.

10-00:42:55

Meeker: Yes. That was my experience with it.

10-00:42:58

Newman: Well, I'll never forget the first time when I went to Egypt and I saw the pyramids and some of the other statuary that's in that area. They have a sound and light show. It's unforgettable. The way they produce it, you're sitting out in the sand by the pyramids and the voices come from behind the pyramids and you hear these deep voices saying, "I stood here where you are sitting." Julius Caesar speaking. Napoleon speaking. It's really a great experience.

10-00:44:04

Meeker: Kind of feel the full sweep of human history in one spot.

10-00:44:06

Newman: Exactly. And I think that's part of the thing that people see when they see something as old and as beautiful as Egyptian artifacts are.

10-00:44:18

Meeker: Well, we have a few minutes left today and in the ten minutes or so that we've got, I'd love to ask you, now that we've been talking about art today, I'd love to ask you about your own relationship with art. You've walked me around your house and your art is wonderful and eclectic. There's clearly like some material that might be called outsider art, right, and some primitive art, as well. Rather than me characterize your collection, maybe you can tell me how you first got into collecting art. I'm assuming it's probably a joint endeavor between you and Ellen.

10-00:45:08

Newman: Oh, definitely. Ellen, really, is the motivator behind the collection here. And the two of us have traveled extensively in our sixty years together. And as we see things that are interesting and beautiful, we say, "Well, wouldn't that be something that we'd like to have." And things that we buy have not been particularly expensive or by anyone of great note. But they're just things that appeal to us that are fun and that are creative. And Ellen calls it untaught art. These are things that are created by people who just have a talent and have just done it. And we spent almost a month in New Guinea.

10-00:47:09

We were in Australia and New Guinea is the next island of that part of the world. And it's really where the cannibals—they still are there. Well, they're not eating people but they're still fighting. And we were told when we went there that there's great creativity but there's no transportation whatsoever. And they said to bring garbage bags because you'll find things there and you'll have to carry them home. I carried home nine garbage bags filled with pieces like those. There's some upstairs. We've got them all over the house. These are all carved by native people. You're out there in the jungle. Just slipped my mind the name of the country. They're fun and probably not of great value but they're just all very personal.

10-00:48:34

Meeker:

Well, it sounds like you've traveled to the four corners.

10-00:48:38

Newman:

We have.

10-00:48:38

Meeker:

Right. Are there any particular places you've traveled that you've really felt a connection with maybe the folk art in that place that you've collected? Or maybe you see sort of an innate value in each of the different cultures that you've interacted with?

10-00:49:00

Newman:

Well, after Joseph Magnin Company was sold and our kids were all taken care of, Ellen and I decided we were going to go around the world and see places that we would never see again. And on that trip we went to Iran and we went to India and to the Himalayas. We would pick up things along the way that we liked and it all just accumulated. We've had a number of artist friends. For example, this piece that you see over in the corner is a woven metal. Ruth Asawa is the artist. She's one of San Francisco's most noted sculptors. Her child went to school with our child and so we met the parents. Ruth Asawa's sculptures have been in the de Young Museum. She's pretty old right now. We have several of her things. You just see something that you like and you get it.

10-00:50:28

Meeker:

I went to the retrospective at the de Young and that was the first time I ever was introduced really to her art in a concentrated fashion. It's remarkable.

10-00:50:38

Newman:

No question about it.

10-00:50:40

Meeker: So this around the world trip that you did after selling Joseph Magnin, was that the first time that you and Ellen started to buy sort of folk art or untaught art?

10-00:50:52

Newman: Yes.

10-00:50:53

Meeker: Okay. And so I guess it was sort of a bug that you caught, it sounds like, at that point in time.

10-00:51:00

Newman: Yes.

10-00:51:06

Meeker: I don't know. Like sometimes it happens or doesn't.

10-00:51:10

Newman: That was an unforgettable experience. And I've told people if you really want to see life in the raw, that's the place to go.

10-00:51:22

Meeker: What do you mean by life in the raw? Just without modern conveniences?

10-00:51:26

Newman: Well, I'll never forget. We went with a group. It was a group called the University Group. Not from California. But we had always wanted to go to New Guinea. They have a period where they assemble all of the tribes from all the islands in their costumes in a stadium for three days. It's just a celebration. You've never seen anything quite like it. But what I was going to mention—we were traveling from one place to another in Jeeps and these tribes, they're still very tribal, and they still are warlike. And we're driving down this trail and all of a sudden the arrows are going across the road. And I said to the driver, "For god's sake, we're going to get killed out here." He said, "Oh, don't worry. They're not shooting at us. They're shooting at each other." At night they stopped shooting. They only shoot during the daytime at each other. The thing I could never get over is that the pig is the most valuable commodity and the men sleep with the pigs and the women sleep out in the field someplace. It's unbelievable.

10-00:53:29

Meeker: Quite different.

10-00:53:30

Newman: Totally. And you take a boat. We took a boat to the northern part of New Guinea on the Sepik River and you would stop every few hours and go and visit a village. These people are carving and they're wearing a loincloth.

10-00:53:52

Meeker: Remarkable.

10-00:53:52

Newman: They were cannibals not a hundred years ago.

10-00:53:57

Meeker: It's remarkable. So in you're collecting, what is it that appeals to you when you see a piece of art?

10-00:54:07

Newman: Well, I think we love color. A lot of that comes from having been in the apparel business. We like things that are unique, that are fun and I guess that are colorful.

10-00:54:30

Meeker: A lot of its figurative, I noticed. There's a lot of drawings and sculpture of people.

10-00:54:37

Newman: Yes. We like certain artists. Roy De Forest is one that we have five pieces of. We know the dealer from UC Davis that has wonderful artists and the big piece we have in the dining room is one that we just happened to be going up to Tahoe one day, stopped in there and saw this beautiful thing and said, "That's for us." And then you saw Abraham Lincoln in the corner there. That was something Ellen read about in the paper. This guy made it all out of cotton. Just kind of unique.

10-00:55:37

Meeker: So you do develop relationships with some artists, it sounds like. Ruth Asawa.

10-00:55:40

Newman: We have.

10-00:55:44

Meeker: And you know Roy De Forest?

10-00:55:47

Newman: We have met him.

10-00:55:49

Meeker: Yes, met him.

10-00:55:50

Newman: He's dead now. But we go to a number of the different shows.

10-00:55:59

Meeker: So you have relationship with galleries and so forth, as well?

10-00:56:02

Newman: Yes. But we have never spent a lot of money on art. It's just something that we'll like and if we can afford it we'll try to buy it. But it's not a great collection of anything. It's just very personal. Incidentally, one of the things that I should have told you about in my museum experience was with John Rockefeller. One of my trustees was the niece of John Rockefeller the Third. She said, "I think if we bring him out here we might be able to get him to leave us his collection." So I said, "Get him out here. Let's do it." And we did. We got him here and we took him to lunch—I'll never forget it—at the Villa Taverna and she forgot to make a reservation and the place was full. And we had to go through the kitchen into the restaurant next door. And here's John Rockefeller. I said, "Mr. Rockefeller, I'm so embarrassed." He said, "Oh, come on. We'll go through the kitchen." He was just a lovely, lovely man. And we got him seated. She kicked me under the table, which was my signal to start talking. And I said, "Mr. Rockefeller, you have this great collection of American art and we don't have great American art in San Francisco. San Francisco is the gateway to Asia. You started the Asia Foundation. When people come to San Francisco, they should see great American art." Anyway, we romanced him. He said, "Mr. Newman, give me some time to think about this." He came out about a month later and I met with him and he said, "Mr. Newman, I've decided I'm going to give you my collection. But I'm going to leave it to you in my will." And he said, "The Rockefellers live to a ripe old age." "Now," he said, "Mr. Newman, I want to be the one to release this information." He said, "If it gets out in the press, the deal is off." Well, at that time Herb Caen was around. I had to get my board to approve getting the Rockefeller collection. I made them swear to me that they wouldn't tell anybody until Mr. Rockefeller made the announcement. Anyway, he announced that he was going to leave his entire American collection to San Francisco in his will and he said, "It's going to be many years before you get it." He was killed in an auto accident six months later and we had that collection. And I have a letter in my safe deposit box from John Rockefeller that I treasure. And he says, "It's because of you that I left that collection to you."

Interview #6 July 30, 2010

Begin Audio File 11 07-20-2010.mp3

11-00:00:16

Meeker: Today is the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2010. This is Martin Meeker interviewing Walter Newman and this is tape number eleven. So what I'd like to start out today by doing is talking a little bit about your family. We've talked about your role as a commissioner in the planning commission and serving as a trustee on the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Now I'd like to get you to talk a little bit about your role as a parent. And you married your wife Ellen in 1950 and your first son arrives a few years later in 1952. Shortly thereafter that, your second son, and then in 1955 your third son. So this may be sort of an awkward question, but did you have like a particular sort of approach to parenting? When your first son arrives in 1952, just after two years of marriage—I wonder if you and Ellen had conversations about, "How are we going to raise our kids? Are we going to do it in a way that was similar to a way in which our parents raised us?" Sometimes young parents will say, "I'm not going to do what my parents did. I'm going to take a different approach to raising my kids. Did you two ever have any conversations about what your approach to childrearing would be?"

11-00:01:48

Newman: I don't think we had any particularly designed approach to raising our children. We had three of the most wonderful, unique sons that any family ever had. Each one was significantly different than his brothers. And Walter was an extremely bright, very sensitive, very caring person who was studious, excelled in all of his academics and was quite a serious young man. Bob, the second son, was a devil may care, just pushed the envelope in everything that he did, from deep sea diving to race car driving and maintaining race cars and getting his pilot's license at age fifteen. He was always very likable, had lots and lots of friends, and he was always at the center of all these activities. John distinguished himself as an athlete and was very gregarious. Had lots and lots of friends and was always involved in any kind of athletics, from soccer to basketball. He was an extremely outgoing and very athletic. Just loved keeping his body in shape and participating in school activities. So we had three wonderful kids and loved every minute with them. And I have to say, as I look back, none of them ever gave us any trouble. We had lots of activities together. None of them ever smoked. None of them were ever drinkers particularly. None of them ever got in any trouble that we knew of. And we just had a really happy time. They all started out in public school at Madison, which was just a few blocks from our house.

11-00:05:03

Meeker: Was that an elementary school?

11-00:05:05

Newman: Elementary school. But Walter, the first son, was extremely academic and highly intelligent and we felt that it was important to foster his education to whatever degree we could and we sent him to Town School. I think it was in the second grade. He thrived there. We'll never forget, at the graduation we were in attendance and when they announced the awards of the different subjects that the students participated in, I think he had more than half of them. We were so embarrassed because he kind of stole the show.

Bob was a good student but kind of a devil may care. Highly intelligent. Had a very high IQ but really didn't seem to care too much. Things came to him very easily and he probably folded his homework, put it in his pocket and then would get into class and be able to do it in just a few minutes.

11-00:06:36

Meeker: Did he attend Town School, as well?

11-00:06:38

Newman: He went to Town School also. And then John, the third one, went to Town School, and he was a very good student also. So we had three top flight students, each one doing his own thing. Then when they graduated from Town School, at that time high schools were three year high schools and the elementary schools were six years. Then there was the junior high. And these kids were going eight years. So when they graduated, it was a difficult decision as to what to do, whether they should go to junior high for one year, public school, and then on to a three year high school, or to try to find a four year high school for them. We wanted to try to give our kids the best education that we could. We felt the only thing that you could give them in the way of an inheritance was a quality education.

So Ellen and I had a philosophy with our children. To let them make their own decisions. To try to guide them, but in the last analysis, they had to build their own lives based on what they thought they wanted to do. So we took Walter, Jr., around to a lot of different schools to see what he wanted to do. And without question he said to us, "I want to go to Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. He did. And during the course of his education there, he got a marvelous education, spent a year in France in the school year abroad program. He became fluent in French and then when he went to Stanford, his French qualified him for a four year achievement. He could have gone into graduate French work if he wanted to. To this day, he's become a great linguist and speaks many different languages in his practice as a physician. Where he's practicing in San Jose, there's lots of different languages that come his way and he kind of speaks them all.

11-00:09:29

Meeker: Well, I'm sure that he must speak Spanish, right?

11-00:09:31

Newman: Oh, he does. Spanish and Vietnamese.

11-00:09:35

Meeker: He speaks Vietnamese?

11-00:09:36

Newman: Well, he's learned.

11-00:09:37

Meeker: That's amazing. I understand that to be one of the world's most difficult languages to learn. Wow.

11-00:09:42

Newman: Wow. But it makes it possible for him to speak to his patients.

11-00:09:48

Meeker: That's remarkable.

11-00:09:52

Newman: So he loved Exeter. And then when it came time for Bob to decide on what he wanted to do, he went to see Exeter and he said, "I want to do that, too." Now, again, Bob was totally different from Walter. Walter was a great student but Bob was kind of a devil may care. He got into athletics. He played guard on the football team. He was chosen the outstanding lacrosse player for the whole conference. He had lots and lots of friends and really enjoyed the whole Exeter experience.

Then John decided he didn't want to follow in his brother's footsteps, so he looked around for schools. He decided to go to school in Southern California. So he looked at several different schools and chose the Webb School, which is an excellent four year high school. He made a lot of friends down there. He participated in athletics and had an excellent academic experience there.

Then when it became time to go to college, Walter had an excellent academic rating from Exeter and I think could have gone to any school he wanted, but chose Stanford, which was, of course, closer to home. It was very difficult for us to have our kids away from us in eastern schools when they were twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old and every time we put them on the plane to go back to school after Christmas holiday, it was always an emotional experience because we would have really liked to have had them at home. But we felt education was just a paramount part of parenting and that was one of the things that we had to give up to let these people excel.

And each one of them did. Career wise, I think any one of them could have done whatever he wanted to do as far as his intelligence was concerned. Walter decided to go to Stanford and we wondered if he was going to get in.

Without any question, he got early acceptance. And he had an excellent four year experience there and then decided he wanted to become a physician and went to UCSF and excelled wherever he went.

Bob had a totally different experience. As I told you, he didn't seem to care. He just wanted to have a good time and explore things. I remember him driving back and forth across the country, do it non-stop. He'd get a couple of guys with him and take off and they'd arrive in San Francisco without ever sleeping. I don't know how they did that. But he was just full of fun. Bob had a very good record at Exeter and decided he wanted to go to UC, the University of California, stay here. He went to UC Davis. As I mentioned, Bob had a very high IQ, but he was really not challenged there at all. He just didn't feel comfortable or whatever it was that made his experience there very unpleasant.

11-00:14:39

Meeker: At UC Davis?

11-00:14:39

Newman: Yes. UC Davis. He didn't study hard. He was getting poor grades and it just happened that a family friend by the name of Harold Zellerbach, who was an older man, knew Bob and he said to us, "He's not stimulated. He's just not interested in what they're teaching him and I think he ought to go to the University of Pennsylvania and get into the business school there." And Bob said, "Let's do it." And so in his third year, he went to Penn, got into the Wharton School and graduated *magna cum laude*. The business course turned him on and he just loved it. And he made a lot of friends there and it was a great, great experience for him.

John, after he graduated from Webb, also went to UC Davis and he made it a thrilling place for him. He adored it and got into athletics very early. Got into the soccer team and had a very, very successful career in soccer. He loved Davis. Made lots and lots of friends and got an excellent education. When he graduated, he decided that he wanted to go into the law and he went to the University of California Hastings Law College and then that takes us into a period of great trauma in our family.

11-00:16:54

Meeker: Well, let's pause here for a second, because I have a couple more follow-up questions about the upbringing of your kids.

11-00:16:57

Newman: Sure.

11-00:16:59

Meeker: It's remarkable the way that you talk about your children and the fact that they each were choosing very different paths, and yet there were some

commonalities. But maybe the most striking thing for me is the fact that you were such early empty nesters, that all three of your kids went to high school out of the area. They went to a boarding high school. Is this typical for people who you're friends with? Is this the typical thing for children to leave the household for their high school education?

11-00:17:54

Newman: I don't think it was typical. I think many, many students did it. But it was a very difficult decision. We felt education was the most important thing and who's to say it was the right decision or the wrong decision. If they had stayed here, they would have had to go to a public junior high or go to Lick-Wilmerding or Saint Ignatius or Sacred Heart for a four year education. Both Ellen and I went to Lowell High, which was a public school and it would have been nice for them to go there for four years, but it wasn't available. So this was an option.

11-00:18:50

Meeker: Why wasn't Lowell available?

11-00:18:51

Newman: It was a three year high school. So coming from an eight year elementary school, there was a hiatus there of one year. The only four year schools were Lick and the—

11-00:19:11

Meeker: Catholic schools.

11-00:19:12

Newman: The two Catholic schools. We had no objections to going there, but we gave them the opportunity of choosing what they wanted to do. And when Walter saw the great opportunities of education in a place like Exeter, he said, "I want to go there." And that maybe set a pattern for the other kids, too.

11-00:19:36

Meeker: You're probably right. It shows a lot of presence of mind and a real early desire to engage the intellect to say, "I'm going to leave home before freshman year of high school."

11-00:19:51

Newman: Yes. Well, when he got to his third year of high school, he said, "I want to go to this school year abroad." I think he was fifteen years old. And I remember Ellen went over to visit him and he was living with a French family in Rennes, Brittany. They didn't speak a word of English. That takes guts. But he did it.

11-00:20:22

Meeker: That's amazing. And also the fact that your three sons, really, not only they had, it sounds like, rather different personalities, but from what you're saying,

their personalities sent them in different professional and intellectual directions, as well, educational directions, ultimately. Sometimes parents are very concerned about kind of harnessing their children's intellect or their children's ambition in one sort of professional direction or another. It sounds like that you were never really tempted to direct your children too closely in one professional direction or another?

11-00:21:13

Newman: The only advice I ever gave my children was be able to do something and be able to do it well. If you're going to be a carpenter, be a good one. And you may not follow carpentry but if things don't go well, you can always fall back on the fact that I can be a good carpenter. Each one of them followed that advice. We didn't steer them in any direction but it's kind of interesting that we had three professional sons. Walter was a physician, John was a lawyer and Bob was a CPA. And they each had different directions. John is quite conservative. I don't know if he got that at Webb School, but he is very conservative. Walter is quite liberal and Bob just didn't care.

11-00:22:30

Meeker: Interesting.

11-00:22:35

Newman: The worst day in my life was the day he got his pilot's license at fifteen and he flew up to Stockton. I said to the instructor, "Are you sure he can handle it?" He said, "He's a darn good pilot."

11-00:22:52

Meeker: How did this come about? Where did he get the interest in flying?

11-00:22:58

Newman: Well, one of the things that we always asked our children to do, if they wanted something badly like a car or a trip or something that was out of the ordinary, that they had to earn half of it and that we would help them with the other half. So Bob came to us when he was fourteen and said, "I want to learn to fly." And we said, "It's pretty expensive. If you can get a job and earn half of it, we'll foot the other half." Well, he got a job washing airplanes down at Flight Safety in San Carlos and he came to us after about six months and said, "Well, I've got the money." He piloted that Cessna on his fifteenth birthday and I thought, "Oh, my goodness, what we've done." But it was all part of our philosophy of let your kids make their own lives. And we fostered that.

11-00:24:08

Meeker: I assume that they cut his shirt tails from that, as well?

11-00:24:11

Newman: Yes. Walter had a hobby of magic. He was a great magician and he got a job as a magician's assistant. He was in high school. Yes, he was in high school

and they were going around the State of California doing magic shows in shopping centers. They all had great experiences, I'll tell you.

11-00:24:48

Meeker: It seems like sometimes parents can, in the name of love and caring, sometimes be a little too protective of their children. And it sounds like your kids demonstrated responsibility but also were pushing at the edges. Wanting to get their pilot's license, which could be very dangerous, and tearing around California as a magician's assistant while still pretty young required you, as a parent, to sort of have the leash rather long.

11-00:25:28

Newman: Well, we did. We wanted these boys to make their own decisions early on and to grow with that. And I think they did.

11-00:25:44

Meeker: You said that there were never any moments that they really went far off course. I imagine in anyone's life you go off course a little bit. You start to veer. How did you—maybe discipline's not the right word but help them correct their course so that they would know to stay on the right course?

11-00:26:13

Newman: Well, I don't think we ever had to do that. Having three boys within four years of each other is a little challenging because they're a handful. But these are great kids and they never gave us any trouble. They were all good students, they were all good citizens in their schools. I don't think we had any problems. We took them camping. We took them on trips. We went up to Canada on a boat together. We did a lot of family things and we loved each other. But they weren't handcuffed to us at all. And they went off to camp. So I think, by and large, they all had good childhoods. And as far as I'm personally concerned, maybe I've mentioned this earlier, but I'm a really happy man from my parents upbringing of me, which was an extremely happy experience. My dad was just a wonderful leader and my mom was a very caring person. My three kids have given me nothing but happiness and I'm married to the most wonderful woman who has made my life extremely happy and fulfilled. And I don't think many people can say that.

11-00:28:07

Meeker: That's very nice. Not to make such a difficult segue way, but there were some moments of difficulty. In particular, when your middle child Bob was at business school at Harvard, correct?

11-00:28:26

Newman: Right.

11-00:28:27

Meeker: He was diagnosed with a brain tumor. How did you find out about this? How was the news presented to you and what was the prognosis when it was first presented?

11-00:28:39

Newman: After Bob graduated from Penn, he went to work for Deloitte & Touche in the consulting area. And then he decided he wanted to go to the business school at Harvard. In his first year he was very successful and loved it there. I think it was his second year, Bob was having some headaches and instability back at Harvard and I think he had some dizziness. He told us about it and we said, "Well, have you been to the hospital?" And he said, "Yes, I have and they told me it was pressure from schoolwork and they gave me some pills." I guess maybe it was in his first year. Anyway, one of his friends at Harvard was a physician. He was at the business school. And he saw Bob with his instability and staggering and so forth and he sat him under a tree and he gave him a few simple tests, one of which is watching your eyes follow a finger as it's brought close to you and evidently he couldn't follow it. This young man said, "Look, you have to go up to the hospital right away. There's more to it than they've told you." He did go to the hospital and they said, "You have a brain tumor." And they called Ellen. They called me and Ellen was in New York at the time. And we said, "We'll be back at Harvard right away." I called Ellen and she had a car drive her to Boston and I flew out to Boston the next day.

It was very interesting at that point. They wanted to operate and we didn't know who the surgeon was. We didn't know anything about brain tumors or what their expertise was. And I only knew one person who could help and that was my friend Peter Greenough. And Peter was married to Beverly Sills and the two of them were very, very dear friends of ours. I'll never forget. I got on a telephone in a booth and I called Peter. He was in New York. And I said, "Peter, I'm in real trouble." I said, "Bob's been diagnosed with a brain tumor. I don't know whether we should let them operate at Harvard. Is there some facility that specializes in this type of work where we should go? What do you think I should do?" He said, "Don't leave the phone booth. I'll be back to you in fifteen minutes." He called me in the phone booth and he said, "The place to go is Massachusetts General Hospital. The chief of neurosurgery there is Dr. Ojemann. They're going to pick Bob up at the Harvard hospital and take him over to Mass General and Dr. Ojemann will see him immediately." That happened. We called Walter, Jr., and John. John was in law school. Walter was in medical school. They both dropped out and came back to Boston.

11-00:33:45

Meeker: They dropped out of school?

11-00:33:49

Newman: Well, they left school. We didn't know how long we would be back there but they just had to give up on their studies. So the family, we took rooms at the Holiday Inn, which was close to the hospital, and we just waited.

11-00:34:11

Meeker: What was the prognosis at that point in time?

11-00:34:15

Newman: Well, that was the problem. They were very uncommunicative to us. We didn't know what was going on. We were just there. I couldn't talk to anybody. Finally, after we'd been there a couple of weeks without any satisfaction, finally, I was at the limit and I said, "I have to know what's going on." And they told me that it was inoperable and that they gave him six months to live.

11-00:34:58

Meeker: Do you feel like during this period of time, did you ever suspect maybe they were unclear about what was going on?

11-00:35:05

Newman: I think so. They had to make a diagnosis. We were in a conference room and Walter, of course, knew a good deal about medicine at that time. And they called us. He picked up the phone and he said, "Oh, my god. Not that." I'll never forget that. Well, it was an inoperable brain tumor. So we then had a conference with Dr. Ojemann and he said, "This is a matter that requires radiation. We can't operate. It's a type of tumor that was too difficult to get into the brain matter." And he said, "Once you start on a particular radiation machine, you have to continue on that same machine until the end of the course of radiation." And he said, "I think the good news is that UCSF has one of the best brain tumor services in the country and it's right in your backyard." He said, "I would recommend that you take Bob home and let Dr. Charles Wilson," who was the chief of neurosurgery, "take him on." So we took his advice. We arranged to have Bob put on a plane.

As I recall, I think it took two seats. He was still immobilized. We brought him to UCSF. And Dr. Wilson, we called him and he said, "Well, bring him right over." We had never met Dr. Wilson but he became a very important part of our lives from then on. I'll never forget, as we took him up to the eighth floor at Long Hospital, we said, "They've given him six months to live." He said, "Nonsense. I'm going to cure him." Well, the team at UCSF worked with Bob for two and a half years and that was the greatest gift that we could possibly have received. And it was quality life. He never suffered. They did radiation and chemotherapy on him to the point that he was able to go back to Stanford Graduate School of Business. We set him up in an apartment in Stanford. He would have to go to see Dr. Wilson about every

couple of months to have the scans. After his second year, they had a scan and they said the tumor is back and there's nothing we can do.

11-00:38:39

Meeker:

So it had gone into remission. It had seemed like perhaps it had been cured? I guess what I'm sort of wondering is that sometimes treatments are to make ones life a bit longer and more comfortable while they're experiencing what remains and then sometimes treatments are aggressive to the degree that there is a real anticipation of curing and being able to move beyond. What was it in your son's case?

11-00:39:17

Newman:

Well, it was a medulla blastoma, which is a childhood tumor. I always wondered, gosh, he'd been playing football and whether that had caused it. But Dr. Wilson said it's been there since childhood. I think he really thought he could cure him. And the sad thing is that today, when I would talk to Dr. Wilson, who is now a good friend of ours, lives on the next block, said today we can cure him. I guess the technology has improved to that point. But at that time he just said, "There's nothing more we can do and take him home and just keep him comfortable." He said, "People will say, well, you can go to the Caribbean and they've got unique medications and cures in Mexico and so forth." But he said, "We'll explore them all for you but he's going to die and make him as comfortable as you can."

In the meantime, we did recognize that this thing could come back and we took Bob on a trip to Europe. We had Peter and Beverly Greenough and their daughter Muffy come with us and we just had a wonderful time. We went to Ireland and England and France. That was a trip of a lifetime. And then our neighbor across the street, Lucy Hume, was a young woman. At the time was a good friend of Bob's. She'd come and sit on his bed every day and kind of hold his hand and just make him happy. And he passed away very peacefully without suffering. And, of course, that was a blessing, too. But he lived to be twenty-seven years old. I've always said to people that he crammed more in twenty-seven years than most people did in fifty-seven years. He was a race car driver, he was a deep sea diver, he was a pilot, he was just a very wonderful young man. I think the only thing he regretted is that he didn't die in a flaming crash of a race car.

11-00:42:32

Meeker:

Well, it must be hard not to look back and see the kind of life that he led. You said devil may care. And not have some sense that he had a sort of sixth sense that maybe his time was limited.

11-00:42:47

Newman:

I don't think he ever realized it. We never told him. And he had great faith in Dr. Wilson and he knew everything was being done that could be. This is hard on me. But he didn't want us to suffer either. But anyway, it was extremely

difficult on the boys, particularly, to have their middle brother just taken away from them. And I think it affected their lives, even today.

11-00:43:32

Meeker: How so?

11-00:43:33

Newman: I think they miss him a lot. They sort of say, “Well, why me? Why did it happen to him and not to me?” And, in any event—

11-00:43:48

Meeker: How do you think that his passing affected their lives?

11-00:43:54

Newman: Well, I think they’re kind of devil may care at this point. They saw how quickly he was taken away and they want to live life to the fullest. That it was a tragedy but it couldn’t be avoided. There was nothing we could do. We would have taken him anywhere in the world if we thought that there was a chance. We had the best people taking care of him and it really disrupted a very happy family. They were extremely sorrowful, along with all of us. We had some family therapy after he passed away. But as they always say, “If you’re dealt lemons, make lemonade.”

It was shortly after that that a dear friend of mine, David Plant, and I were having lunch. And David said, “Walter, you just lost your son with a brain tumor. I lost my son with a brain tumor, too.” And Dr. Wilson had taken care of him. So we said, “We’re both pretty active directed people who don’t just sit back and let things take their course. Let’s try to do something about this.” And we saw Dr. Wilson and Wilson had a brain tumor research center at UCSF and we said, “Let’s see if we can’t help him find cures for this stuff.” And we went out and raised money and we tried to help Dr. Wilson and expand the visibility of that research center.

Well, people then said to us, “Why should it only be UCSF? The whole brain tumor problem is much bigger than UCSF.” People suggested that we start our own foundation to help people with brain tumors. So David and I got together. We hired an executive director, Libby Stevenson, who had a brain tumor herself, and we started the National Brain Tumor Foundation for two purposes. One, to help people who had brain tumors, giving them information, telling them where they could go for treatment, giving them information about the types of brain tumors and what to expect. And the other was to provide funds for research to help find a cure for brain tumors. We started with just two people and we got a few people on the board. Sharon Lamb, a neurosurgical nurse, and through people that we knew who had had the brain tumor experience we built a board and we suddenly had a going concern. And this thing expanded and expanded and expanded to the point that we really had a very effective organization. Dr. Wilson wrote a pamphlet for us that

could be distributed free to anyone who was affected by brain tumors. And it's really become a definitive piece of work for lay people on brain tumors. And over the years, gosh, I'm trying to think when Bob died.

11-00:48:41

Meeker: In 1981.

11-00:48:42

Newman: Eighty-one. So it's almost thirty years. We've helped thousands of people with the brain tumor problem. We've raised a lot of money, had a scientific advisory board to channel the money to the research that was the most promising around the country, to the point that there are several other agencies that help brain tumor people. One of them was the American Brain Tumor Society in Boston. And we've had some work to do with them in sort of a partnership. About a year ago, they approached us and said, "Let's merge and make the really National Brain Tumor Foundation." And so the board decided to do that and we formed the National Brain Tumor Society with a Boston and a San Francisco office. It is truly a national organization today. There's another one in Chicago which I think someday will probably join the group.

And the way it's been organized today is that the Boston people raise a lot more money than we do, and it goes into research, whereas all of the patient services work, counseling, giving seminars and so forth, is done out of San Francisco. An 800 number, and depending on what the person wants on the phone, if they want help, they're sent to the San Francisco office. If they want research work or to donate, it goes to the Boston office. It's a very happy arrangement and just think it's all an outcome of a tragedy that we had.

11-00:50:58

Meeker: You said that when you first decided to do something proactive in response to this, you partnered with your friend David Plant. From what I understand, what you established was the Friends of Brain Tumor Research at UCSF?

11-00:51:14

Newman: Correct.

11-00:51:17

Meeker: To support Dr. Wilson's research lab, in essence.

11-00:51:24

Newman: Right. Well, he had a center. It was more than a lab.

11-00:51:26

Meeker: Okay. A research center. Medical research is not inexpensive and most of the grants are either coming from sometimes pharmaceutical companies or the federal government through the NIH and the National Science Foundation and so forth. What did you feel like you were going to be able to accomplish in

establishing this new friends group? Did you feel like you were really going to make a serious impact at the time that you established it?

11-00:52:09

Newman: Well, we thought we would do whatever we could in terms of raising money.

11-00:52:16

Meeker: What was the need?

11-00:52:17

Newman: I went with Dr. Wilson back to Kansas City to solicit support from the large accounting firm.

11-00:52:38

Meeker: Was that H&R Block or—

11-00:52:42

Newman: Yes. Mr. Block, his wife had a brain tumor, and we were successful. We raised some nice support. And there were others. There was a man in Los Angeles, a motion picture producer who we went to see and got major support. I'll tell you another thing that was just fantastic. There was a movie actor. You're too young to remember. His name was Slim Pickens.

11-00:53:20

Meeker: Of course.

11-00:53:21

Newman: You remember Slim Pickens?

11-00:53:22

Meeker: Yes.

11-00:53:23

Newman: Had a brain tumor. We found out about it. Dr. Wilson had been treating him. So we went to see Slim Pickens and asked him if he would make a video about brain tumors and how treatment can be helpful and talked about UCSF and the research that was being done there and solicited support. We went up to Santa Rosa and got into his stable with a couple of horses and Slim Pickens came up with the horses and we had the video taken. It was really kind of down home. And then we had copies of that video made and sent around to TV stations all over the country. So you say what could we do? We did everything we could.

11-00:54:28

Meeker: I imagine you had a meeting with Dr. Wilson fairly early on.

11-00:54:35

Newman: Oh, we did. Often.

11-00:54:37

Meeker: When you asked him what can we do to help, what did he say? How did he feel like you could contribute? What were his needs, in other words?

11-00:54:47

Newman: Well, I think money was important. They were always short of money in research areas. And visibility. Those were the two things that we thought we could do. There really was no brain tumor agency in the west that was bringing this disease into the forefront. It's not like prostate cancer and it's not like breast cancer. It's fairly unusual, although we find now that there is a larger incidence of brain tumors. It could be that people are living longer, it could be exposures to radiation. But the fact that we do have now, or at that time, there was very little publicity about it. There were never articles written about it. Dr. Wilson felt that we could help by exposing the problem and also raising money to help it. So we did what we could. And he was very generous about the whole idea of our moving out and starting the Brain Tumor Foundation. He became a member of our board. And he's an icon in the field of brain tumor work.

11-00:56:43

Meeker: When did it evolve from the Friends of to the Foundation?

11-00:56:50

Newman: Oh, I think it was about '84 or '85.

11-00:56:53

Meeker: So it happened pretty quickly.

11-00:56:55

Newman: Yes.

11-00:56:56

Meeker: When a family experiences a trauma like this, you're heightened to the failings of a system, whether it's the failings of the medical establishment or simply like a lack of basic information that's written in a language that you can understand. What were some of the failings that you felt like needed to be addressed from the position of a family member going through this that then became part of the Foundation's work? Does that make sense?

11-00:57:42

Newman: Yes. I think you never want to have people give up hope. When they're diagnosed with a particular type of brain tumor—and we call it brain tumors rather than brain cancer. It is cancer, though. But we've tried to identify it as a rather separate type of an illness.

I think you have to try to have people do everything they can to keep a patient comfortable, knowing that it can be a rather long illness and that there is no cure. So one of the things that the Foundation, the Brain Tumor Foundation, did, and still does, is make numerous seminars around the country on teaching families how to deal with the brain tumor because people change. The family has to take care of these things. They can't take offense when people's attitudes change. So I think you can try to give people as much knowledge as you can about what the disease is but so far they have to recognize that there are many different types of brain tumors. Some of them people can live with them for a long time. But if you've got, for example, a glioblastoma grade four, it's just really a matter of time. And, of course, one of my major disagreements with the medical fraternity is that they, well, as I mentioned before, they told us that Bob had six months to live and he lived two and a half years of quality life. That's not fair. They should say, "Well, we don't know how long you have but these things do turn fatal." So we have given families a great deal of information. We've had seminars where we've had over a thousand people come to the airport hotels and stay for the weekend and we've brought Dr. Wilson and other leading people in the field of brain tumor research and therapy. One of the great things—

[End Audio File 11]

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12-00:00:09

Meeker: So as I'm asking these questions as we're moving on—speaking of moving on, sometimes after something traumatic like this happens, a lot of people sort of just want to kind of close that chapter of their lives. Was it ever hard for you to continue working on this topic because undoubtedly it would have reminded you of the difficult experience with your son.

12-00:00:41

Newman: Well, it did not. As I mentioned before, Bob's life was a very happy life, and I'm very, very grateful for that. Because to have twenty-seven years of a wonderful life was great. I felt that I was working in his memory in helping to establish the Brain Tumor Foundation. His fatality could help other people who were experiencing similar situations and make their lives better from it, so that out of this darkness maybe we could help light come through. Because nobody else was doing it as far as we could see. And every time that phone rang at the Brain Tumor Foundation, somebody was in trouble. We were there to try to help them to the best of our ability.

I started to mention, at the seminars that we produced, we would bring hundreds of people together. And there are many different types of brain tumors and we would get each type of brain tumor into a little seminar session of themselves where they would sit down and go, "What's happening to you?"

“Oh, gosh, well, I’m having the same thing.” “Well, I guess maybe it isn’t so unusual.” There was a comradeship just being involved in the same problem. So I feel in a way it’s been a major contribution.

12-00:02:50

Meeker: I think you maybe just already answered this question but I’ll ask it anyway. How do you think the experience of both patients and families dealing with a brain tumor has changed in the thirty or forty years since then?

12-00:03:06

Newman: I think there’s a lot more interest in it. A dear friend of ours died from a brain tumor about four or five years ago. I think it’s that long. And their family had significant resources and formed an organization called ABC Squared, which advanced from something to do with brain—anyway, they formed this foundation that’s specifically for research and they had a seminar and they invited Mrs. Newman and me. I remember Dr. Keith Black, who is one of the premier neurosurgeons in Southern California. I think he’s at City of Hope. Very widely respected in the field of brain tumors. He said that the important thing for the brain tumor community to do is to recognize the importance of brain tumors, even though they’re not as plentiful as other types of cancer. But to bring it to the forefront so that more money will be spent on research and possibly a cure can be found.

There’s something called the blood/brain barrier. I’m sorry. It slips my mind at the moment. The brain has a barricade that different kinds of substances cannot cross the brain barrier. There’s a lot of work going on in being able to get things into the brain to stop the brain tumor.

12-00:05:41

Meeker: So the next wave of science is moving along.

12-00:05:45

Newman: Well, radiation has helped a lot. They’re now able to use much more focusable radiation onto the tumor, but so far they do return. It’s still a very, very tough disease and there is no cure. The doctors, if they’re candid with you, will tell you that.

12-00:06:19

Meeker: Well, let’s move on to a different topic, if that’s all right.

12-00:06:22

Newman: Sure.

12-00:06:23

Meeker: I, again, appreciate you being so candid and open about talking about this. It’s clearly an important part of your life and it would be wrong to gloss over it.

12-00:06:33

Newman: Well, there's nothing more devastating than losing a child. You never get over it. But life goes on.

12-00:06:48

Meeker: Maybe just one final question. Obviously doing this public work was one way to address the loss of your child. What did your family do to make sure that it wasn't overly negatively impacted, that it didn't disintegrate because of this trauma?

12-00:07:14

Newman: Well, it was devastating for my wife and for my sons, too, and for my parents and Ellen's father. But I guess life goes on and it was very sad. I have in my office still a box of letters of condolence from Bob's friends. They were multitudes. And all of our friends. It affected everybody that knew him. What can people do? All they can do is say we're terribly sorry and sympathetic and all of that. But people did send money to the Brain Tumor Foundation. It's interesting. When people do try to help, and I know a woman in San Francisco now who has a glioblastoma grade four. She came out here and I got her involved in the work. And some people like to support the patient services aspect of it. Other people say, "Well, gee, I want to find a cure. I want to put my hundred dollars into helping some research person find the key." So it's interesting that we've got these two aspects. It's a two pronged effort to do the best you can with a terrible disease.

12-00:09:12

Meeker: Okay. So another thing that I wanted to talk to you about was the topic in general would be under the rubric of Jewish community life in the Bay Area and maybe more particular about your leadership at Temple Emanu-El, which is your congregation. Maybe you can tell me a little bit about, just sort of going back in your life, what was the extent that you were raised within a congregation? Was your family active in Jewish communal life? And what impact did that have on you?

12-00:09:53

Newman: Well, that's a very interesting question. My parents were not religious. They were always very proud to have been of Jewish birth but neither my mother nor my father attended a congregation. As a matter of fact, I don't think any of the Newman family had any association with religious activities, although my Uncle Edwin, my father's brother, did have a period when he was active at Temple Emanu-El. But other than that, there was no religious affiliation of any of the Newman family.

From the Magnin's point of view, it's very interesting. A large number of the Magnin family became Catholic. Cyril was not a member of a congregation either. And it's very interesting that Ellen and I both attended religious school and both felt, to a greater or less extent, an affiliation with a religious

organization, a temple. She went to a Temple Sherith Israel and I went to Temple Emanu-El. We went to religious school. I was confirmed. Although in the time when I was thirteen years old, hardly anybody ever got bar mitzvahed. Today, almost everybody gets bar mitzvahed.

12-00:11:52

Meeker: Yes. It's a great party.

12-00:11:54

Newman: So I was never bar mitzvahed. Because my family didn't have any particular association with Judaism, I just did it on my own. And I'm very happy that I did because my traumatic experiences in the military—as they always say, there are no atheists in foxholes. You always kind of pray that maybe you can get through this alive. But in any event, I was always very proud of my association with Temple Emanu-El. Then they invited me to join the board. It's hard to remember dates. I guess it was in the seventies.

12-00:12:55

Meeker: The date I have from your résumé is you were president and director from '80 to '86. So I assume you would have -

12-00:13:02

Newman: Okay. I was on the board in about '78, something like that. And then they asked me to be the president. I, as I've told you before, don't just take things as they're handed to me. I try to improve them and to make them as good as I possibly can. I don't speak Hebrew and I would go to the synagogue on the Holy Days and some Sabbaths and I would sit up on the dais with the rabbis, which the president always did, and I'd look out at the audience. The congregation was all white haired. And I thought to myself, "How can you build an organization with all old people?" You've got to get young people to make things grow.

12-00:14:26

Meeker: At that point in time as you noticed this, and this was, I'm sure, happening in Christian and Jewish congregations around the country in sort of mainline, right? Like mainline Protestant or Reform Judaism. Why do you think that was happening at that point in time? Did you get a sense of why it was mostly people with gray hair?

12-00:14:58

Newman: Well, I think in this particular case, the direction of the congregation was rather staid and old fashioned and didn't appeal to the younger more dynamic people.

12-00:15:20

Meeker: What do you mean by staid and old fashioned? Can you give me an example?

12-00:15:22

Newman: Well, they were using the same religious sermons, the ceremonies that had always been the same. And people had grown up with them and there was no difference. I'm not saying this in any derogatory sense. The membership in the Temple was declining and I felt that something had to be done about it, and the board did, too. And I looked around and the rabbi had been there for twenty-six years and he was a brilliant man, but unfortunately his accent sometimes made it difficult for people to understand him. I felt that a change had to be made. That's ways difficult, because people get entrenched and there's loyalties. But I really felt for the long-term growth of the congregation, that it had to take a turn towards youth. So I gave the rabbi notice that he was going to be asked to retire. He was very genuine about it and said, "Well, maybe the time has come for me to do it." The same thing was true about the cantor. Cantor Portnoy had a beautiful voice that had lost its beauty. People loved him but he'd been there for thirty years. And so it was a very bold decision but I recommended to the board that we do this and we did.

So then the next question is how do you replace them. I then found out what the strongest union in the world is, which is the rabbi's union. You just don't say, "Well, I want to put somebody in there." There are people all over the country that are waiting to be interviewed. This is what they call an E sized temple. It's the largest size in the country. And people that are in smaller congregations want to go up to those bigger ones, so they tell you who you're going to interview. Well, there was a young assistant by the name of Robert Kirshner who had been Rabbi Asher's assistant rabbi for a couple of years and everybody adored this man. We wanted to make him the rabbi. But you had this union problem. So we told the union we want to appoint this man. They said, "No, you can't do that. You have to interview five people."

12-00:18:40

Meeker: When you say union, is it a literal union? Okay, I didn't know that. Interesting. It's a labor union.

12-00:18:50

Newman: I wouldn't call it a labor union. It's an association of some kind.

12-00:18:53

Meeker: Okay. Like a trade association or something?

12-00:18:55

Newman: Yes, whatever.

12-00:18:57

Meeker: A professional organization.

12-00:18:59

Newman: Exactly. So we interviewed the four people that they sent to us and we said, “No”. Then they sent some more and we said no. Then they finally said, “Okay, you can appoint him.”

12-00:19:11

Meeker: And I imagine the people they were sending you were just—

12-00:19:14

Newman: Older people.

12-00:19:15

Meeker: Older people, yes. People who had worked their way up.

12-00:19:19

Newman: Yes. And who wanted to work up further.

12-00:19:24

Meeker: Yes. Maybe ambitious but not necessarily vibrant.

12-00:19:29

Newman: Yes. And I wanted somebody who had energy and was dynamic and fun and could attract younger families. We interviewed Bob Kirshner and we gave him the position. He was a very young man. He had graduated from Stanford. He worked his way through college playing the guitar. He’s brilliant.

12-00:20:10

Meeker: Other than his youth, what was it about him as a rabbi, as a community leader, that made him so attractive to you?

12-00:20:24

Newman: His sermons were the finest sermons that I’ve ever heard anybody give. So many of these sermons you never know what the heck you’ve heard when you leave. Bob Kirshner would tell you what he was going to say, then he would say it, then he would tell you what he said. It was usually just one point, but you never forgot it. People were just raptured to hear him talk. And we got an executive director, Irwin Weiner. Executive director runs the day to day activities of the congregation. And Irwin Weiner came to us and he was also a very aggressive doer type of person. So we decided we were going to give the temple a real kick and we were going to expand it into the community much more than it had been. And when we had the ordination ceremony for Bob Kirshner to become the senior rabbi, Ellen, my wife, put on the ceremony. She got the archbishop, the head of the Episcopal Church, the Reverend Amos Brown from the African American Third Baptist Church. I can’t remember all of them. It was like a who’s who in religiosity. The place was packed. That was the beginning of what I think was a real emancipation of the

congregation. And people came to hear Bob Kirshner preach and they loved what he did.

I don't know if we initiated, but I know we certainly expanded a program of working with the African American community, of helping some of these Afro-American kids who were having difficulty with their studies. I don't remember the name of it but we had volunteers from the temple that would go down—I was one of them—to help the kids with their studies. Then we expanded the program, where we would take the congregation down to the Third Baptist Church and they would come up with their congregation to the Temple Emanu-El. And we really made it much more of a community wide effect than it had been in the past. It had been very insular before and we were trying to make it much more visible and attractive to younger people.

We started a kindergarten. Working with the Jewish Community Center, we built a preschool and a kindergarten so we would get the young families involved with the congregation. It was very exciting. We really had a head of steam. People were joining to get their children into the religious school. There was all kinds of activities going on.

12-00:24:58

Meeker:

Did you have any of the gray haired population feel left out?

12-00:25:05

Newman:

Not at all. No, they adored Bob Kirshner. They would sit with rapt attention when he was preaching. And the preaching was not centered at the young people. These were subjects that affected everybody.

There was just a feeling of youth and movement and things were happening there. Then we had a very interesting experience. We asked Cantor Portnoy to continue until we could find a replacement. There's a cantorial school in New York. They have a graduating class every year and we went back to hear the graduating class perform. Rabbi Kirshner and James Schwabacher, who was a professional singer, and Harold Stein, one of the members of the board went back and we interviewed and listened to all of the graduates. Temple Emanu-El had a history of music. The organist had always been a world renowned organist and Cantor Portnoy had a really good voice and people liked to hear him, but things had kind of gone downhill. We listened probably to six or eight graduates and we said, "None of them is good enough." We left and we asked Portnoy if he would stay on another year. The next year we went back to hear the new graduates, and in the course of hearing these people, the director of the school said there's a person who had graduated some years ago who would like to be auditioned. Well, none of the new graduates suited us. Then this woman came on and started to sing and it was like going to the opera. Jim Schwabacher listened to this woman. He said, "My goodness. She can sing anything." So we met with the director of the school and we said, "Gee, this is great." He said, "Don't take her. It's trouble."

12-00:28:39

Meeker: What did he mean by that?

12-00:28:40

Newman: Well, he didn't go into it any further. So we left to come back to San Francisco. We got to the airport in New York and I said to Rabbi Kirshner, "I want to find out what this trouble is. Before the plane leaves, I want you to call her rabbi and find out what this is." So he got on the phone, he spoke to the man, he said, "I don't know what they're talking about. She got this place singing. Everybody loves her. We've never had any problem with her. She's been here three, four years." He said, "I think she's just great." So we asked her to come out for an audition and she just knocked them dead. She sang like a bird. And that was twenty years ago or more. And Cantor Roslyn Barak has made that place just a musical gem.

12-00:29:55

Meeker: And she's still there, correct?

12-00:29:57

Newman: She's still there.

12-00:29:59

Meeker: I had the opportunity to hear here at Walter Shorenstein's memorial. My colleagues and I who attended were blown away. I grew up in a Catholic church and I never heard singing like that.

12-00:30:13

Newman: Well, she's got an operatic voice. And if we hadn't made that phone call, we never would have hired her. We never found out what it was. It might have been some personal thing with the director of the school. But she just loves it here.

12-00:30:33

Meeker: I just mentioned I grew up in a Catholic church and separation between men and women and the roles they can play in a church is very strict and very slowly changing. How did that play into the selection of who might be eligible to be rabbi and who also might be eligible to be cantor?

12-00:31:00

Newman: Interesting question. I never thought about that. But as far as Judaism is concerned, I don't think there's ever been a distinction between men and women. At the present time, you have Cantor Barak. There's a rabbi who's a lesbian and she is unbelievable. She's one of the finest preachers that I have ever heard in my life and could very well become the senior rabbi at some point. So I don't think there's any discrimination but it's interesting that you mentioned it, because up until that time we hadn't had any women. But there

was an assistant rabbi who was a woman who recently left. So I guess it just depends on who's around.

12-00:32:02

Meeker: Yes. If memory serves, I think the first woman to be ordained a rabbi was in the early 1970s, '72 or thereabouts. Yes. So there's obviously an expansion of opportunity.

12-00:32:14

Newman: Yes, there is an expansion. I never thought about it, to tell you the truth.

12-00:32:19

Meeker: Also here we are in San Francisco and the fact that one of your rabbis is a lesbian. I wonder how that went over in the congregation when she was moving up the ranks.

12-00:32:33

Newman: I don't think there's any discrimination, to tell you the truth. I have always, in my attitude towards people—I want to make sure I say this correctly—it's not what you are, it's who you are. She is just terrific. She's a very religious woman and when she speaks the message is great. And there are other people who can speak and not say anything. So people hope that she's going to be the one to give the sermon when you go there.

12-00:33:22

Meeker: So you've talked about a lot of the successes of the period of time that you served as a leader there. So you served from '80 to '86 as the president. Did you continue to serve on the board after your presidency?

12-00:33:37

Newman: Well, I think I served as a year or so just sort of as a past president. But then we had a very unfortunate thing happen.

12-00:33:49

Meeker: Well, I was going to ask you about some of the challenges, both during the period of your presidency and then since then. How does a congregation respond to challenges that it is confronted with?

12-00:34:01

Newman: Oh, I never had any challenges. Everyone that I knew was extremely enthusiastic about the activities, about the direction that the temple was going. And when I left as president I felt that I had made a good contribution and that it could be carried on. And the person who succeeded me did carry things on and it became very active. I don't attribute it to what I did, but maybe I helped turn it around. Today the place is just booming. I think they have over 3,500 members and it's just—

12-00:34:57

Meeker: What was the membership when you first took over? Roughly?

12-00:35:03

Newman: Less than 1,500.

12-00:35:05

Meeker: Wow. How do you determine members? Somebody who makes an annual donation or—?

12-00:35:11

Newman: No, they become a member. You pay.

12-00:35:12

Meeker: Oh, okay. It's like a membership.

12-00:35:16

Newman: You bet. It's not inexpensive. They let you know it.

12-00:35:19

Meeker: Okay. So that's a substantial commitment of a family or an individual.

12-00:35:23

Newman: Yes. You don't have to. They don't turn people away because of inability. But if you can, they ask you to be supportive. I think the most exciting thing that happened in my career as president, and it's really a wonderful story—gosh, I guess it was in '81 or '82. I got a message from the city manager of Colma. The congregation has a cemetery in Colma called The Home of Peace and adjoining it, to the north, was a twenty acre parcel that our forefathers bought as expansion room. And there was really no need for it for burials, so over the years it had been used by farmers to grow flowers. I think we were getting \$25,000 a year in rent. Well, the message that I got from the manager, the city manager of Colma, was that they wanted to run a road up the middle of our twenty acres to the top of Mount Sutro because there was development going on up there. And I knew enough about the real estate world that if you divide a property up, you get two small pieces of property. So I got the board together and I said, "I think we should propose to the city that they move their proposed road over to the edge of our property and then that would leave us with a full nineteen acres instead of having two nine acre parcels with a road up the middle of it. It just didn't make any sense. And I suggested that it would certainly make our property much more valuable to have the one parcel and that we should give the land for the road to the city of Colma. And the board said, "I think that's a good idea." But I said, "We're going to ask for something in return for that." We're going to ask them instead of having it zoned agricultural, have them zone it commercial." So we contacted the City of Colma and said, "We'd like to propose that you run the road up the north edge of the property and we're going to give you the land to do it and we're

going to even subsidize you to help you build the road.” “Oh, this is wonderful,” she said. “And what can we do for you?” I said, “Very easy. Just zone our land commercial.” And she said, “I can do that in one meeting.”

Well, it turned out that there was an auto dealer that was really behind a lot of this activity. Tom Price is his name. Tom and I have become good friends since then. Tom came to us and said, “I’d like to rent the land for auto dealerships.” And we said, “Well, that would be great.” And we have to prepare the land because the farmers had been there for many, many years. He said, “Fine, and I’ll rent the land.” Well, anyway, to make a very long story short, when we started to clean up the land, we found that the farmers had buried tons and tons of plastic which they used to cover their seed and the cost of preparing that land was just huge. So we sued them. We sued the farmers. They had been insured. We got the insurance company to pay the major part of getting that plastic out. Anyway, to make a long story very short, we got a long-term lease from the auto dealers and I believe their leases are subsidized by the parent companies. The rent is two million dollars a year to the temple. It’s kind of put the temple on easy street.

12-00:40:43

Meeker: Yes. Subsidizes a lot of day care, doesn’t it?

12-00:40:47

Newman: A lot of cemetery work.

12-00:40:49

Meeker: That’s a lot of cemetery work, too.

12-00:40:50

Newman: So anyway, I would say that’s the best real estate deal I ever made.

12-00:40:56

Meeker: Well, and it’s a great legacy that you left for the congregation. I don’t know how you feel about talking about the difficulty associated with Rabbi Kirshner’s departure.

12-00:41:10

Newman: I’m happy to talk about it.

12-00:41:13

Meeker: Okay. Because when we did some of the background interviews, I believe it was your son Walter who basically sort of described it as evidence of your commitment to kind of sticking by an individual who was very close to you and was a demonstration of your loyalty and faith in people who meant a lot to you. So it seems like it is worth talking about what happened and how you responded to what happened.

12-00:41:54

Newman:

I was devoted to Bob Kirshner, and am to this day. I felt that he was a man of great intellect. One of the finest speakers I've ever heard and a man who really had tremendous vision about the congregation. I'll never forget the night Ellen and I were at home and the phone rang and it was Paul Matzger, who was the attorney for the congregation and the president. He said, "Walter, we've got a problem at the congregation with the rabbi." I remember my words. I said, "Is it money or is it children?" He said, "No, it's women." And he said, "We've really got a problem." And I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know the extent of it. I never got into the details. I just didn't want to. But as it turned out, I guess the activities involved quite a few people, quite a few women. I always thought that it could have been saved. But the people involved whose wives I guess had been active in the relationship just wouldn't let it quiet down. And as a result, Bob left the congregation under some very severe criticism from a lot of people. Fortunately, he was able to reestablish his life and has been very happy. I've met his wife. She's a delightful person and Bob had a very productive and happy life in Los Angeles at the Skirball Institute. I had always thought he could have been saved. I hoped he could have been saved at the congregation. I even spoke to the chief of psychiatry at UCSF who knew Bob and said he'd be happy to work with him. But Bob wasn't interested in that. So the whole thing just cratered and it shook the congregation to its roots. But Rhoda Goldman was the president at the time and she was able, because she was just a great diplomat and a wonderful leader, to hold things together. They got some young rabbis to come in on a temporary basis and continue things and life went on. So, as often happens, things quieted down and Bob lost his designation as a rabbi but then has since been reinstated. I always said if I was thirty years younger I would have started a new congregation and brought him back, because Bob's deeply religious, he's brilliant, he can convey the messages of faith and life and so forth, and I think he has a great contribution to continue to make.

12-00:46:41

Meeker:

Do you feel like his current position is giving him an adequate situation to continue that work?

12-00:46:50

Newman:

Well, he seems to be happy there. I think he now has the designation of rabbi and I suppose he could go to a congregation if he wanted to. But I've never asked him if he was looking for another job. I had always hoped that he would become the head of Skirball, but the current chairman's been there quite a long time. I don't know what's in the cards for him.

12-00:47:27

Meeker:

Do you think that there was any permanent or long lasting impact upon Temple Emanu-El from this situation?

12-00:47:41

Newman: It was a tremendous uproar during the time that it happened. But I've been told that this is not an unusual kind of a condition in many religious organizations. That it happens in all kinds of churches, too.

12-00:48:05

Meeker: Yes. Yes, it does.

12-00:48:06

Newman: Bob came from a very poor background in Los Angeles and he was a man of tremendous capacity and here he was given this position that really was a position of eminence in the community. I had always felt that he could become the leading religious spokesman for the Country if he had stayed with it, because he was just that good. But maybe he got too much too fast and couldn't handle it all.

12-00:48:50

Meeker: Sort of a slightly pivoting a little bit, thinking more about the congregation and its community. You had talked about the massive growth, almost three times of membership in the organization since you've been involved in it really closely. Also during this period of time, from what I understand, attributing to things like sort of post Cold War immigration of Russians to San Francisco, you have a much larger population of conservative Jews in San Francisco. I'm wondering how that has impacted the work of Temple Emanu-El as the main reform congregation in San Francisco. Has there been like a mutual sort of engagement? Has it impacted the work that you have done at Temple Emanu-El?

12-00:49:51

Newman: I think Temple Emanu-El today is very strong. They have kept pace with the times and, as you mentioned, there is a significant swing to conservatism. The way they've dealt with it, they actually have two services. One is a more conservative service, which is the traditional service that they hold in the main sanctuary that's been there since time immemorial. Hasn't changed since I was a boy. And then for the younger people and maybe people of more conservative persuasions, they have a totally different service. So they go on at the same time. They play a guitar. I don't like it at all but a lot of people go there. The younger people go there.

12-00:51:08

Meeker: You mean the guitar is associated with the more traditional service?

12-00:51:11

Newman: No. I don't know what they call it. It's just the non-traditional service. My grandfather was the president of the congregation early on and I had a nice feeling that maybe I was carrying on his tradition when I became president there.

12-00:51:46

Meeker: Well, it seems like there's a few people who have subsequent generations.

12-00:51:50

Newman: Mortimer Fleishhacker followed me and his father had been president. So, in a sense, it was having the old families continue their association there.

12-00:52:05

Meeker: That's a remarkable history. Well, I think we're probably going to wrap up for today. Do you have anything else you'd like to add about any of the topics we covered today?

12-00:52:15

Newman: I don't think so. I'm glad we talked about the temple because, in a sense, I was able to make some kind of a contribution. I had a wonderful team of directors who helped particularly on the Colma project. John Samter, who was a retired engineer, actually went out every day to supervise the cleaning up of that property. And John Sampson, who was a director, found that there was an abandoned railroad right of way that came through the cemetery in the course of this real estate. His cousin was the president of Southern Pacific and he said, "Let's buy that, clean up the title." So we bought it for \$25,000. Well, BART now runs through there and they paid us over two million dollars for the right of way.

12-00:53:37

Meeker: Wow. Pays to have someone with a little bit of real estate experience on your side, it sounds like.

12-00:53:45

Newman: It did. It really worked.

Interview #7 September 1, 2010

Begin Audio File 13 09-01-2010.mp3

13-00:00:05

Stein:

So here we are. It is September 1, 2010. This is our seventh session and I think this is the beginning of tape number thirteen. This is Julie Stein here with Walter Newman. So I think it would actually be great if we can start talking a little bit about your interest in education, which it sounds like has been another thing throughout a lot of your public service and your life that we haven't touched on as a theme yet in this interview. Before we started rolling tape you were talking a little bit about the Troops to College Program, which we touched on in the third tape in the context of your interest in working with veterans, but it sounds like there have been some really exciting new developments. So could you tell us a little bit about that project, your involvement in it and then some of the exciting things that have been going on?

13-00:01:04

Newman:

I think one of the greatest needs in America today is improvement in our educational system. I think one of the most important aspects of the educational system is the community college program, because it's easily accessible. It doesn't require a lot of background in order to become a student. Anyone can enroll. For those people who lack direction in their life, their career paths, it's a wonderful way for people to learn about what's available out there for two years and if they find that they like education, can go on to four year colleges from there.

So I've been particularly interested in the City College of San Francisco because it is a community college. It's one of the largest in the United States. Over a hundred thousand students, nine campuses, and the chancellor has said that one out of every two people in San Francisco has some relationship with City College. They're under budget pressures. They have capital requirements. So I volunteered to go on the foundation board of City College to help them in their various efforts to raise funds and to let the public know more about City College and what's available out there to the masses. There were a number of problems with joining the Foundation. You may have read in the paper where the chancellor misappropriated some funds. Not for his own benefit. Actually, he took some funds, diverted them from the college to the Foundation, then to have Foundation money contributed to a bond issue for the City Community Colleges. So Haig Markdikian, who's a dear friend of mine, and who is the president of the Foundation, and our board, decided that the Foundation had to become totally independent from the school. Which it was intended to be but never was. And as often happens in community colleges, the college is able to intrude into the funds in the Foundation. Well, to make a long story short, we have now become totally independent and we are raising money for different projects for the college.

And in that regard, there was a program that Governor Schwarzenegger has instituted called Troops to College. And Bucky Peterson, Colonel Bucky Peterson of the Marine Corps, is the head of that program in the state. He contacted me to see if we could do something to improve the program at City College of San Francisco for returning vets. Chancellor Don Griffin, who was formerly a psychologist at the Veterans Administration, when I talked to him, said this is so important. These veterans are coming back, many of them have post-traumatic problems, they can't concentrate. They can't mix freely with the younger people and they really need a facility where they can be together, where counseling can take place and just a veterans center. I said, "Well, let's go ahead and do it." The chancellor appointed George Rush, the football coach, to handle this program from the inside and I was going to handle it from the public's point of view. And George Rush is just dynamite. He's great. So we've worked very closely together.

The good news is that we just completed the project. It really kind of fell together so quickly. Every veteran that I called to ask for money sent me a nice check. So we raised enough money to do the project. George was able to get all of the craft unions, the carpenters, the plumbers, the electricians, the painters, and even the carpet people, to donate not only their materials but also their labor to making this project happen. Through a contact with the Swedish consulate, we were able to ask Ikea if they would help us to furnish the facility and they were extremely generous. Said, "Come over, take whatever you need. Bring a truck and pick it out." So George and his people went over there and got all the furnishing necessary. We were able to get a refrigerator. Macy's gave us coffee makers. We bought a big screen TV and McMicking Foundation gave us the money to buy six computers. So the fellows and women can access the internet and all of that. Then it became evident that there was a lapse in the time that some of the veterans who apply for GI benefits encounter before they receive their GI funds and they need emergency money for living. So we went to Wells Fargo, and without thinking about it a second time, they said, "Certainly. Thank you for calling this to our attention." And yesterday we had a presentation of a check for \$30,000 for a no interest loan fund to returning veterans. The vets at the college are just so overwhelmed. The place is packed with people coming in there, eating their lunch, shooting the breeze with other vets. Then we got the Veterans Administration to have two or three counselors come there two or three days a week to meet with the vets, talk about GI entitlements, talk about career paths and talk about their problems so they don't have to go to the VA for counseling.

So anyway, the whole thing has just fallen together. We think it could be a model not only for the state but for the whole country for the veterans returning to civilian life. So I'm very proud of it. The college is overwhelmed. So that's a happy story.

13-00:08:42

Stein:

That's a really remarkable story. And then the purpose of this space, it's for veterans who are already enrolled in the college? Is that correct?

13-00:08:54

Newman:

Well, veterans coming out of the service trying to decide what they're going to do. If they decide they want to go to college, we're trying to make it easy for them to enroll, to feel comfortable about coming there and not having hurdles to meet in order to get enrolled. So we're just a facility to kind of make college entrance much more pleasant. That's what they've told us it's doing.

13-00:09:32

Stein:

That's fantastic. Given your own experience as a veteran, and it sounds like a lot of the people involved in this also have military experience, are you noticing, if you're interacting with some of these younger veterans who are coming out of the current wars, ways that you can transcend differences or do you find a common experience with these younger veterans?

13-00:09:58

Newman:

I think there's a mutual respect on the part of anybody who has been through the service. When I tell them that I'm a veteran of World War II, they recognize the relationship that their generation has with my generation. So there's a mutuality of friendship, an immediate acceptance of a person having been through the same kind of things that they have. One of the things that I tell so many people is that the war that I was in, and I was in direct combat, you were shooting at somebody in uniform and they were shooting at you because you also had a uniform. So you knew who the enemy was. But in Iraq and Afghanistan, you don't know who the enemy is. It could be a child who throws a grenade. It could be a woman in a burka. It could be an elderly person. It must be terribly difficult for combat people dealing with civilians who could be your enemy and you have to shoot first and ask questions later. I think that's one of the things that's causing a lot of the mental problems.

But an interesting thing I found out just yesterday. I'm working on a program right now. I'm calling together the veterans, the college and UCSF. Because UCSF is preparing a series of four courses that people will take online dealing with the problems of returning veterans. People can enroll in it and take whichever course they want. One is on post-traumatic syndrome. One is on how these problems affect families. One is how it affects children. The fourth one is how it affects stress. It's possible for the veteran who's taking that course to communicate with the psychologist or psychiatrist who is presenting the program directly for counseling. So the university has asked me if I could help facilitate bringing this program to fruition. So we have a meeting of about a dozen people next week to see what we can do.

13-00:12:56

Stein:

Wow. It sounds like they're lucky to have you.

13-00:12:59  
Newman:

Well, you do what you can.

13-00:13:03  
Stein:

But these projects seem like a really logical intersection of a lot of your experiences and interests.

13-00:13:11  
Newman:

It does. Exactly. I don't know if we discussed it, but I had three sons and both Mrs. Newman and I are products of the public schools in San Francisco. But the public school system really I don't think has necessarily met the challenges of these current times and we didn't encourage it but felt it was important. The only thing you really can give your children is an education. So they went to private school. The Town School for Boys. I went on the board of the Town School and was on the board for some ten years. Then from there I became the treasurer of the school and helped them to do their building programming thing. Then the Burkes School, which is a girl's school, asked me if I would go on their board because of my experience, and I did, and then it was very interesting that there was a problem with the girls' high school because the girls didn't want to go in the single sex high school. We finally decided through John Peal, who was the president of the board, a wonderful leader, to start a new high school called University High.

13-00:14:40  
Stein:

What time was this?

13-00:14:42  
Newman:

It's been about twenty-five years now. I've got a few kind of interesting anecdotes. Burkes School had two campuses. One is out on 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. It's a big campus. It's got tennis courts and play fields and buildings. Then they owned a school down on Jackson Street which was kind of a metropolitan school. It was about half a block square and the decision was made that we were going to start University High and it was going to be located out on 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue where all the fields are. It was just a typical great location for a high school. I was put in charge of handling all the real estate of the two different schools and getting the permits. I was the head of the planning commission at the time.

And I got a call one day from a very prominent attorney and he said, "Mr. Newman, I'd like to speak to you about the location of your school." This man was a litigator. Very prominent. He said, "I represent the neighbors at 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue," and he said, "The neighborhood does not want that high school out there. They don't want kids sitting on their doorsteps smoking, they don't want kids running up and down the streets in their hot rods. We are going to block your program, keep it from having the school out there." Well, I believed him. This man was not joking. He said, "If you don't adhere to our wishes, we'll have you in court for the next ten years." So I went back to the board and I said, "We really have a problem here. I don't think you want to

get in a court fight about this location.” So as an alternative, it was decided that we would move the high school down to the Metropolitan location on Washington and move the little girls’ school out to 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. So I talked to the attorney. He said, “That’s great. We’ll even help you raise the money to do it.”

Well, we did it. We didn’t know if the high school was going to be a success or not, but we knew that something had to be done about Burke because the girls just were not going there any longer to the high school. So we got a wonderful young man to come as the headmaster of the new school. Dennis Collins came out from the East. He took command of the situation and said, “This is going to be my school and it’s going to be great.” We didn’t know if anyone would enroll in it or not. To make a long story short, it became probably the eminent school in San Francisco as a college preparatory school. One of the things that I learned from Cyril Magnin in my experience there, when a company is getting started, try to help them get started by not loading them up with debt. Try to make it possible for them to be successful early on so that they can then support you with their program later on. And I took that information to heart and we recommended that the new school could buy the downtown property. They would not have to pay anything on the purchase for five years until they got their school up and running. It was wonderful to find out that the first year of enrollment they had over 300 students. They now have a second campus and the school is just unbelievable. Dennis Collins did such a superb job in getting it organized. The school paid Burke’s for the property and the mortgage was burned twenty years later. So it’s just a success story for the city of San Francisco.

There’s only one thing that I regret, and that is that the last time I talked to the admissions officer, they could only take one out of seven students that applied to the school. I had always hoped that they would foster another school of the same type in another part of San Francisco. But they have their own problems to worry about and that’s never taken place. But there’s probably a need for maybe two or three other schools that are academically superior, where students can get advanced programs and can get into the college that they want. And that’s what’s happened.

13-00:20:31

Stein:

It sounds like you were involved in a lot of the really early decisions and meetings about launching this new school. Was there a mission statement or were there aspects of University High School that you had intended to be different from the other private high schools that existed at the time?

13-00:20:54

Newman:

There was a mission statement. That it was to be a truly academic college preparatory school. But it also was to be co-ed. At that time, some of the schools were not co-ed. We didn’t know whether—Hamlin’s and some of other single sex schools would send their students there, but when it came

time for the first enrollment, they came rolling in. So Dennis Collins set the whole future of the school in that direction of college excellence. And they got excellent educators and there was a lot of community outreach. There were a lot of scholarships to underprivileged students. It's just gone on from there.

13-00:21:55

Stein:

Yes. Do you have a sense, looking back at your own public education, and then your sons went to private boarding schools, that the landscape, the educational landscape in San Francisco, has changed significantly?

13-00:22:13

Newman:

To some extent I think it has. But I still think that the school system needs a lot of attention. We have some excellent high schools but I think that the whole program could stand major improvement.

13-00:22:40

Stein:

Have you remained involved in education since then?

13-00:22:44

Newman:

Well, only financially in supporting these schools to a small extent and then my work with City College. So that's about the story.

13-00:22:55

Stein:

That's pretty significant.

13-00:22:57

Newman:

Ellen and I have been deeply involved with UCSF all along. Ellen was the founder of the UCSF Foundation and was the president of it for a number of years and today UCSF is recognized as one of the leading institutions in the world. So we're very involved with UCSF and I just resigned after twenty years serving on a committee that was most interesting. It was called the Conflict of Interest Committee and I was appointed by one of the chancellors. I don't think anyone recognizes that all of the programs, the scientific programs that these research people at the university are involved in, many of them form companies, small companies, and then they associate with larger companies. Our job was to see that the university was never compromised, that everything was totally arms length, that any information that was gained by research became public information and we would meet monthly and the number of applications for grants and so forth, which had to be reviewed by us, was just enormous. I learned a lot. But there were two community members on that committee and the rest were scientists. So I enjoyed it. I learned a lot. But my job was, "if it can't be shown on the six o'clock news, don't do it." I'm happy to say—I can't take a lot of credit for it—but the university never had a real conflict of interest. We sent back a lot of research to be divorced from things that they were doing but it was all for the good of the university.

I think one of the things that I'm very proud of, talking about education, Chancellor Sooy at the university wanted to build a new hospital and they

received a grant of two or three million dollars from Joseph Long of Longs Drug as seed money. It was to be built out on Parnassus Avenue near the university. At that time there was a lot of unrest in the Haight Ashbury. Lots of upheaval about parking, about traffic, about the usual contestable things in San Francisco. They as much as said we don't want that hospital built because it's going to infringe on our lifestyle and so forth. I don't think I've told you about this previously, but the chancellor said we have to build this hospital. I was the head of the planning commission at the time. "Do you have any help that you can give us?" Well, I had seen public hearings, many, many in the eight years that I was on the Commission, particularly where there were almost mobs of people supporting a plan or a program would stack the room, the hearing room to the point that the people who were going to be the permit giving group virtually were overwhelmed by the crowd. So I said, "Look, the people who have to approve this is the Board of Supervisors. What you people should do is start organizing a petition campaign and get 10,000 signatures of people who want this hospital built and how important it is. Copy those so that you have one block of copies for each supervisor. You put it on their desk the day of the hearing. On the day of the hearing, you let the medical students out of college, you get all of the nurses, you get buses, you get as many supporters as you can and you go down to the hearing room two hours—not immediately before but two hours before—and you stack that room. Well, the day of the hearing, the people were so overwhelmingly in favor of the hospital that were in that room, the petitions were all on the desk of the supervisors and it passed unanimously.

13-00:28:26

Stein: Oh, wow.

13-00:28:29

Newman: I was home that night and the chancellor called me in tears. He said, "Walter, if you hadn't done that, I don't think we ever could have built this hospital."

13-00:28:38

Stein: That's an amazing story.

13-00:28:39

Newman: So that's just one of the little byplays of things that have happened.

13-00:28:43

Stein: Wow. I know from—

13-00:28:48

Newman: And incidentally, Walt, Jr., who was a student, sort of organized the students to take them down there.

13-00:28:53

Stein: Oh, did he? Oh, wow. I think it was your other son, John, who mentioned that both you and your wife have been awarded the University Medal. I know that you tend to be on the modest side, but if I could ask you to set that aside for

one minute and maybe explain what that medal was honoring and what type of service it was noting that you had provided to the university.

13-00:29:23  
Newman:

Well, in the case of Ellen, she has been just a dynamic supporter of the college. Both of us have from the days when we were young people we recognized how important UCSF was to the city of San Francisco. It was not widely recognized as such a tremendously important medical facility and research facility. In fact, I used to say if a person came to town and said at the bus station to the taxi driver, "Take me to UCSF," they might have ended up at State College or at USF or at City College but nobody knew what UCSF was. And I went on the Board of Overseers and was helpful in getting the name of the university out in the public. Ellen started the Foundation and helped them raise huge amounts of money. And then, I don't know if I've told you about the Mission Bay. Did I tell you about the Mission Bay story?

13-00:30:43  
Stein:

No. I'd love to—

13-00:30:46  
Newman:

Julius Krevans was the chancellor and a very fine chancellor and he said at one of the overseers meetings, "Biotechnology is the future. We need twenty acres to build a biotechnology campus and we don't have any money to buy it. But we really have to see into the future." There is a campus right out here on California and Walnut which the University bought from Fireman's Fund and there was a huge community uproar about UCSF taking over that property. The neighborhood didn't want it. They thought research would be blowing germs into the air. So there was a terribly big community fight over that. Ellen and I were big supporters of it. We knew the University was prudent and it would be totally safe. But in the long run, the decision was made not to force the issue and to make it just an administrative headquarters. But in the meantime, this biotechnology campus was foremost in the chancellor's mind.

So I thought as a volunteer, I'd had a background in real estate, in the planning process and also commercially, that I would look around and see if I could locate them a property that might be of interest to them. I looked everywhere. The only place that I could find twenty acres that might possibly work out for them was not in the city of San Francisco but it was the garbage dump across from Candlestick Park. 550 acres that was bare land. It had been a garbage dump but it was owned by Southern Pacific. It could be developed. So I thought, "Well, let's explore it anyway." I'm sorry, I was on the Redevelopment Commission at the time. I was president of redevelopment. So I called the head of real estate at Southern Pacific to ask him if I could have an appointment to see him. I told him that UCSF in a biotechnology center would be one of the most dynamic projects that had been done in Northern California. If they would give us twenty acres, they would then find that their other 500 acres would suddenly become a campus with meeting rooms, with laboratories, with commercial buildings, with hotels, and it would be the

launching of making Northern California the biotechnology center of the west. And the next thing I know, the real estate man said, "This sounds like it might be very interesting." He said, "We've got to go in and see the chairman of the board." Before I knew it, we were in a meeting with the Chairman of Southern Pacific. I talked to them about this program. I tried to sell him on it. He said, "Mr. Newman, I'm not in the habit of giving land away." I said, "Sir, but you know if you give you will get, because this is tremendously important to you." He said, "Well, let me think about it. Find out if the university is interested in doing it." So we got the university people to come out there and look at it. They said, "Well, if there's no other place, we'll do it." So the chairman of the board said, "Well, do you think that you could get Berkeley interested in this? UC Berkeley and maybe Stanford?" "Well," I said, "I don't know but let's try." So anyway, we had some more meetings and the thing was starting to get going. Which would have meant that UCSF would have moved a major program out of the city of San Francisco because that's Brisbane. Well, anyway, to make a long story short, I think that the powers that be in San Francisco saw that this might take place and move a huge number of employees out of the city and cause a direction of biotechnology to move closer to the southern part of the region. Anyway, whatever happened, Mission Bay suddenly decided that they would give the twenty acres to the university and keep the university in the city. They gave them the land free. But, unfortunately, without giving us any notice, Southern Pacific suddenly sold the whole garbage property to a Taiwanese company, so we were back to square one. But we went to the Taiwanese company and they said, "We'll do it." So the thing was really getting hot and then the city fathers saw UCSF moving and they put the pressure on to develop Mission Bay and so Mission Bay was in San Francisco. I gave a talk on the future growth of San Francisco some months ago and I said, "To my mind, Mission Bay was the single most important development that's taken place in San Francisco in a hundred years because there are over 5,000 employees down there. It's made Mission Bay the biotechnology center of Northern California. Stem cell research is centered there and it's bringing large numbers of new employees to San Francisco." I think it is just a major step forward in the economic growth of this area. So I played a small role in it.

13-00:37:54

Stein:

When you were involved in some of these negotiations, trying to work out the Brisbane campus, did you have an opinion on moving part of the university outside of San Francisco?

13-00:38:04

Newman:

I would have certainly preferred to keep it in San Francisco. But the chancellor had said that this is of ultimate importance that we get this built. So if you have a lemon, you try to make lemonade. That's what we were trying to do. As it happened, it just became a factor in making it possible to get it done in the city.

13-00:38:32

Stein:

Yes. In the newspapers readings that I was doing from that time, it sounds like when Tuntex, right, the company in Brisbane, offered up the land for free, it sounds like that was sort of the first domino in the series that then convinced Mission Bay to offer it as well. I don't know if that matches your memory of that.

13-00:38:51

Newman:

That's it. Absolutely. That's the story. You had the facts.

13-00:38:56

Stein:

Well, you've told us a little bit about the real estate deals that you were coming up with for Joseph Magnin. It sounds like they were always pretty fantastic deals, very favorable, but I've never heard of anyone convincing a company to donate the land for free. Was this unprecedented? Was this a type of a deal that you had ever heard of before?

13-00:39:21

Newman:

I don't think so. You look at development projects. There are all kinds of incentives that are given to attract people into an area. There are tax deferrals and the city will give land to some facility. There are all kinds of things that are done to make a program come to fruition. Twenty acres out of 500 was a very small thing to do to get a major, major project going. So it was not unreasonable for them to give it. Southern Pacific was ready to give it, and then without telling us he just sold the whole thing.

13-00:40:17

Stein:

So you were back to square one.

13-00:40:19

Newman:

I was furious. I was furious.

13-00:40:21

Stein:

Yes. Well, luckily it worked out, clearly.

13-00:40:28

Newman:

Apropos of real estate, did I tell you about the Gap?

13-00:40:31

Stein:

Well, yes. I would love to hear that one, too. I have one more question, I suppose, about UCSF. I was struck by one quote in one of the articles that I was reading about the development of the UCSF Mission Bay. That the author said that San Francisco has gotten too expensive to produce anything except for knowledge. That it was so hard to find enough space in the city to build. You couldn't have a factory, you couldn't have maybe the—you talked about your family starting off selling real things and the millinery business that you were involved in and retail, but now it seems like the main thing that San Francisco is producing is information and knowledge and scientific discoveries. I'm curious if in your experience here you've seen a similar shift or if that seems like a relevant observation on his part.

13-00:41:33  
Newman:

San Francisco is not a welcoming city to business. There are so many different taxes that are put on business enterprises. There's very strong labor unionism here. So as far as the intellectual pursuits and scientific pursuits, UCSF is the spawning group for that. Mission Bay is UCSF. I can tell you of something that I'm working on right now. I'm on the board of a research institute at the Veterans Administration. There's an effort to move the entire Fort Miley, which is one of the most prominent veterans centers in California from Fort Miley down to Mission Bay because the researchers at the Veterans Center are all UCSF scientists. There's such a natural affinity between the science that's going on Mission Bay, the science that would be going on with the veterans program just adjacent to it, and it's much more convenient for the veterans to go down to Mission Bay for their treatments and for whatever they need than to have to go way out to 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue. That land out there, I don't know if you've ever been there, but it's the most beautiful scenic site in San Francisco. It overlooks the Golden Gate Bridge. It overlooks the Golden Gate. If we move the whole VA down to Mission Bay, that could all become Golden Gate parkland. So that's in the fire. We're trying. We've located some land in Mission Bay. If we can get the government to fund it, we could move.

But apropos, you asked me about my UCSF. One of the things that I haven't told you. I had a terrible accident and I had a very severely detached retina in my eye. I was in an elevator that dropped a number of floors. The shock when it hit—I didn't realize it at the time—but I developed a retinal detachment that was so severe that when I finally went to the doctor, he said, "My god, this is awful. Lie down on the floor right now. We have to operate tomorrow." Well, anyway, the operation took place at a hospital, not UCSF, and they messed me up. I was in bed with sandbags on either side of my head, so I couldn't turn my head, for days. For weeks. Finally my wife said, "Look, this is just terrible. We're going up to UCSF and see what they can do. Well, Alex Irvine is one of the world's renowned retinologists and he looked at my eye and he said, "Well, it isn't good but we're going to fix you up." And they put what they call a buckle into my retina and I have never had another problem. I walked out of there two days later. And at that time, the head of the ophthalmology department was a wonderful guy by the name of Steve Kramer. And Steve and I became good friends and they decided they wanted to build a new ophthalmology center. So Steve said, "Walter, will you lead the campaign?" Well, I couldn't say no. They'd saved my eyesight. So then that's kind of a fun story.

I'm not sure that the people involved are going to appreciate this. But we had to raise somewhere around ten million dollars. So I took it on. I had a friend who was on the board of trustees of the Koret Foundation. I took him to lunch and I said, "Could you get me a lead gift for a new vision center at UCSF?" I said, "I need about three million dollars." He called me a few days later and he said, "Well, I talked to the board. It seems that Mr. Koret, who had died, had had terrible eye trouble and had been treated out there and really was very

grateful for what he had gotten and they said that they would give me the three million.” But they said, “We want to name it.” Well, I went to the university and they said, “That’s fine.” So that induced other funds to come in and we got up to five or six million and then Steve Kramer was able to interest a man by the name of Arnold Beckman, the Beckman Instrument Company, to come up and see the research work that was being done at UCSF. Beckman was very interested. Steve convinced him that it was a good program. He said, “How much money do you need?” Well, we raised the budget, I think it was to fifteen million. He said, “I’ll give you the money but I want to name it.”

13-00:47:52

Stein: Uh-oh. How’d that work out?

13-00:47:56

Newman: So anyway, to make a long story short you will go out and you’ll see Beckman Research Center on Koret Way with the Koret Research Building.

13-00:48:14

Stein: Wow.

13-00:48:15

Newman: The Koret people were very unhappy with me.

13-00:48:18

Stein: Oh, no. Well, I’m sure that UCSF was still overjoyed that you gave them a new eye center.

13-00:48:23

Newman: Exactly.

13-00:48:25

Stein: So it sounds like the award that you were given was a recognition of all of these various types of service to them.

13-00:48:30

Newman: Well, it is. We don’t do these things for adulation. UCSF, I always say if you have a really serious illness or a condition, that’s where you want to go because they love difficult conditions and the treatment there is superb. And they treated our son Bob. They gave him almost three years of quality life. What a gift that was. We can never thank them enough for that. So we helped Dr. Wilson in the neurosurgical area raise money. That was the outgrowth of the National Brain Tumor Foundation, really. We still are deeply involved with UCSF. We gave them a significant amount of money in memory of our son. It was a lot for us. It was to foster a lecture program, a yearly lecture program, and to support a research fellow.

13-00:49:56

Stein: Is that still in existence?

13-00:49:58  
Newman: Yes.

13-00:49:58  
Stein: That's wonderful. I have one sort of random question about UCSF. The Mission Bay campus that I just talked about.

13-00:50:09  
Newman: Sure.

13-00:50:10  
Stein: You said that you were the president of the Redevelopment Commission at the time that they were considering doing this new campus. Were there plans for the Mission Bay area? When I read about it, it sounds like it was almost not a wasteland, but a forgotten area.

13-00:50:28  
Newman: It was.

13-00:50:29  
Stein: Could you describe what it was like and then what you might have thought happened to it?

13-00:50:34  
Newman: Well, it was a rundown industrial area. There were a lot of trucks parked out there. It's right on Islais Creek. There was not any development there. It was just SOMA, south of Market. There were sheds. Nothing of any importance. There's a sand and gravel facility there. There's a big golf driving range. There was just really hardly anything of any importance in that area. It took a lot of vision to create Mission Bay for a biotechnology center. It's changed San Francisco.

13-00:51:29  
Stein: Was it on the radar of the Redevelopment Commission?

13-00:51:34  
Newman: No. We had nothing to do with it.

13-00:51:34  
Stein: Think it was on the radar—okay.

13-00:51:37  
Newman: It was all done by Mayor Willie Brown and the people—the name slips my mind—who owned that property.

13-00:51:52  
Stein: Catellus?

- 13-00:51:51  
Newman: Catellus. And they gave the property to the university because we still had that Tuntex deal in our hip pocket, so they knew that if that didn't develop that I think the university might have gone down to Brisbane.
- 13-00:52:07  
Stein: Have you spent time out there? Have you seen it?
- 13-00:52:11  
Newman: Oh, I spend a lot of time out there. It's fabulous. There are a lot of meetings that take place there. The National Brain Tumor Society is having their annual meeting out there. There are scientific meetings, public meetings held at Mission Bay all the time. It's a great facility. There's just a tremendous amount of research. Have you ever been there?
- 13-00:52:41  
Stein: I haven't walked around. I've driven by it.
- 13-00:52:43  
Newman: Gee, I'll tell you, the lab people tell me that it's state of the art. When you see some of the research that's being done down there, it's just pushing the envelope.
- 13-00:53:00  
Stein: And you say that you think that this is, in many ways, the future of San Francisco.
- 13-00:53:04  
Newman: It is.
- 13-00:53:05  
Stein: Can you talk a little bit more about that?
- 13-00:53:09  
Newman: Well, if you go down to Mission Bay, you'll see a number of buildings that have been built. The property has all been bought up by large development companies. There are dozens of biotech firms that are locating in Mission Bay because of the proximity to UCSF. You'll see a lot of companies coming out of the association with the scientists at Mission Bay. There are small research companies and then there are big ones. Merck and Pfizer and all of those people at some point are connected to some greater or lesser degree there. There's a major facility in Mission Bay called the Gladstone Institute and Gladstone has a separate building that is doing absolutely some of the greatest research in the world on AIDS, on heart disease, and it's just one of the most highly recognized research facilities in this part of the world right at Mission Bay. It's all come to pass because the land was made available, because Gladstone was located in the General Hospital premises down on Potrero and they had an old building and now they've got this beautiful setup. Ten years from now, Mission Bay is just going to be thriving. New hospitals are being

built. I think this veterans thing might possible come to pass. It's just really getting started.

[End Audio File 13]

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14-00:00:00

Newman:

Presidio Heights Association of Neighbors has been in existence for fifty years. The idea is to help us maintain the quality of life that we have. It's just a lovely area. The Richmond, the Sunset, Marina, Cow Hollow. There's a movement afoot that the planning department is trying to put into effect which would permit greater density and less parking requirements. 1,250 feet on either side of transit corridors. They have chosen California Street as a transit corridor. So that would affect everything all the way down to the Presidio Wall and everything all the way to Geary Street. You can see apartments going up around here and much more parking problems. So I think we've got ten neighborhood associations that join together. PHAN kind of led the charge and we sued the city. We wanted an environmental impact review. We won and the city appealed it and went to the Court of Permit Appeals, the appellate court, and we won there. But it still hasn't died. We maintain that the density of the city should depend on the area. That the style of a neighborhood should be the thing that determines the development there. That you just shouldn't arbitrarily say, "Well, we need more housing and we're going to just slap it down—"

14-00:02:20

Stein:

Just anywhere it can go.

14-00:02:20

Newman:

Yes.

14-00:02:21

Stein:

Yes. It's like what you were saying about your time on the Planning Commission, about smart growth. Yes.

14-00:02:27

Newman:

So that's just another battle that we're fighting.

14-00:02:50

Stein:

So we were talking a little bit about some of the work that you were doing under the umbrella of WSN Enterprises, I assume. We haven't talked at all about how that came into being. So I'm hoping that maybe you could tell us about the formation of your company and then what sounds like one of the most exciting deals that you were involved in with Gap, Inc.

14-00:03:15

Newman:

Well, after I left Joseph Magnin and Federated Department Stores asked me to come work as the vice-president at I. Magnin Company, which I was happy to

do and enjoyed it. After three to four years, I don't remember how long I was there, the new CEO came in and said, "Well, I think we're going to eliminate your position." I said, "Well, that's fine." I had a real estate background and I decided to associate with a company called Damon Raike & Company, which was a very good commercial real estate company. I worked with them for two or three years and then I decided that I really didn't want to work for another company, I really wanted to start doing my own thing. And so I located down in the Phelan Building and I got my real estate broker's license and went out and started doing deals.

In the course of some ten years, I've probably had two or three pretty good sized deals. That's what I wanted to do. I didn't really want to work all that hard, that I was out on open houses all the time doing that, but I wanted to try to be constructive and do some interesting projects. So I knew Don Fisher and one day Don and his wife and Ellen and I were having lunch together at their place on Atherton and Don said, "Walter, you know all the real estate in San Francisco. Find me a property where I can build an international headquarters." I said, "Well, Don, that's a big assignment." "Well," he said, "see what you can do." He said, "There's only one condition. Every office has to look out on the Bay." Well, I said that kind of limits what we're going to do." But I got out and started looking around.

14-00:05:53

Stein:

And he wanted to stay in San Francisco, I assume?

14-00:05:57

Newman:

Well, I wanted him to stay in San Francisco. He had a big facility down in San Bruno. He also had rented the Joseph Magnin space down on Harrison Street where we had our headquarters. So I knew the area very well. I had bought that property for JM. So what I did was look around. I went down to Brisbane and I looked along the coastline and there were a number of different places. But Don didn't like them. I went down to Hunter's Point. There were some very nice properties down there but he didn't want to put his people down there. So I was just trying to get an idea where I could locate it, and then suddenly we had an earthquake in 1989. Loma Prieta. We had an Embarcadero Freeway that nobody really liked and it was shaken down. It was decided that it would not be rebuilt. Well, that opened up some property that previously didn't have a Bay view. I knew there was some redevelopment land down there that the Redevelopment Agency owned. There was also a big property that the California State Automobile Association owned and they were moving to Oakland. So I said, "This looks like we could accumulate enough land to build the Gap building."

So I went to the Redevelopment Agency. I was out of there at the time. They thought it was a great idea because we would be able to keep a lot of jobs in San Francisco and presumably we'd build a beautiful building.

14-00:08:11

Stein: Could I ask really quickly, the land that the Redevelopment Agency owned, were there plans to redevelop it for some future project?

14-00:08:20

Newman: Yes, but they didn't know what it was going to be. There were no projects that had been proposed. So having the parcels, the two redevelopment parcels, the piece that was vacated by the automobile people, and then there were two parcels that were privately owned. So there was a lot of aggregation that had to be done. I was working with a colleague from Grubb & Ellis and the two of us went to see Don and said, "We think we've got it for you." He said, "Well, if you can put it together, let's do it." Well, it took two years to do it.

14-00:09:16

Stein: Just the real estate deal? Wow.

14-00:09:19

Newman: Yes. But we finally aggregated all of the parcels and there were a lot of conditions that went with this development because the agency wanted a park on the Bay side. They wanted some restaurants on the Bay side. All of which Fisher and his people agreed to. So we had a deal. Of course, the Gap building was built and the only disappointment that I had, I said to Don, who was the founder of the Gap, "Here's an opportunity for you to build one of the most beautiful buildings in the city, because it's right at the Gateway. As you come across the Bay Bridge, it's an entryway to the city." Well, I'm sorry to say that I don't think he accomplished that. I won't say anything further. When they do have contests for the ugliest building in the city, that often wins.

14-00:10:33

Stein: When the freeway came down, was there a scramble for that property or for the area that was freed up? Do you recall any of the discussions when—

14-00:10:46

Newman: No. No, there was really nobody else that was interested at that time. It was a big deal. It was the biggest real estate project that had been done in the city for that period. It was over 600,000 square feet.

14-00:11:05

Stein: Wow. Do you recall visiting the waterfront or what the waterfront was like in maybe your teenage years or your childhood? The waterfront itself has gone through very dramatic changes over the—

14-00:11:17

Newman: Oh, sure. And Mr. Magnin played a very important role in that. The waterfront was owned by the State of California and Cyril was made the president of the Port Commission. He had so many friends and so much influence, and all good. He never got anything for himself. It was just that he was always trying to do good things and he felt that San Francisco should own its own waterfront and he convinced the state of California to turn it to the City of San Francisco. But when I was a boy, this was a tremendously busy

port and there were freighters coming in and out of the city all the time. When Ellen and I were first married sixty years ago, we had a small apartment on Telegraph Hill and it was just so exciting. You could hear the trains going back and forth along the Embarcadero and you could hear the boats tooting as they came in. You'd hear the crates being loaded and unloaded on the ships. Today there's hardly any of that. It's all gone to Oakland. So San Francisco, along the waterfront today, is a lot of uses of the sheds that were formerly very productive port properties, but now they're small businesses, they're storage centers. The port as a port is really not very important to San Francisco. This city, its primary source of revenue comes from tourists, which is sad to say. We've lost a lot of our offices, our major corporations. Chevron has moved to Walnut Creek. Transamerica is not here. We still have a few but as a business center and a legal center, as a banking center, I don't think it's what it used to be.

14-00:13:52

Stein:

Yes. Do you see the waterfront playing an important role in the future of the city?

14-00:13:56

Newman:

I think so. I think you'll see it developed.

14-00:14:00

Stein:

Under what guise or in what—?

14-00:14:02

Newman:

Well, I'm not exactly sure. They have all kinds of plans. But the South Waterfront is an area that's totally undeveloped and you can see a lot happening down there. The North Waterfront is very controversial. The people up on Telegraph Hill or Russian Hill don't want anything built that's going to obstruct their views. So I don't see high rises going along the north waterfront. At some point, the piers might disappear because it's very costly to keep those piers up. You might see low rise development. There's a forty foot height limit all the way along there. It could become restaurants. Lower intensity development.

14-00:15:02

Stein:

It is kind of fascinating that the waterfront seems to have run as a sort of refrain through some of your family history and with Mr. Magnin originally developing the idea for Embarcadero City and then for the involvement that he had selling the port back to San Francisco. So remember when we talked about the US Steel building. It seems like the debates about what to do with the space have been a sort of recurring theme throughout San Francisco's history. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it does seem like the Gap building and that real estate deal, turning some of the waterfront space into offices and headquarters has sort of altered the use of the area, at least around the ferry building.

14-00:15:55  
Newman:

Well, I think the reconstruction of the Ferry Building was one of the most important things that's happened here in a long time. It refocused the tourists and the commuters' interest in a very attractive building and it made a focal point for the foot of Market Street. There has been a rather slow but important series of lower rise developments that have adjoined the ferry building. I think that's going to continue. I think people like the boat transportation. It kind of gives people a fresh air way to come into the city. So I think that there's going to be continuing development along there. But apropos of the Gap building, I thought it was just terribly important that we keep over a thousand jobs in San Francisco. I played that card with the redevelopment people. That a high rise building down there was important in terms of keeping those jobs here. If we couldn't have built that building, I think Don would have taken them down to San Bruno.

14-00:17:40  
Meeker:

You had mentioned the architecture of the building and mentioned that you didn't really want to comment more on it. But were there other designs that were floating about? Maybe if you had your druthers, what sort of structure do you think would have been more appropriate for that space?

14-00:18:08  
Newman:

Well, it's very easy to criticize. Mr. Fisher, I told him I thought the building looked very bulky. But he said, "Look, I've got all these people and I've got to have that bulk." Again, I thought his choice of architects could have been a little bit better. He had Stern in there. I don't think that it was as attractive as it could have been. I don't know what it could have been. Incidentally, I've mentioned Ellen, my wife, is a junkie with architecture and she's on the Board of the AIA.

14-00:18:57  
Meeker:

Well, and Don Fisher was no slouch when it came to art himself, right? You would think that he would have wanted to invest in a more prestigious looking building. Obviously there's not much else you can say about that. There are different models, of course, of urban development and different cities have looked at their formerly industrial lands, the rail yards and sort of light industrial places. On the West Coast, it seems like one city that both architects and planners both love, more than any other, perhaps, is Vancouver in British Columbia.

14-00:19:40  
Newman:

Sure.

14-00:19:42  
Meeker:

One thing that they've done is the architecture is not sort of extreme in a Frank Gehry sort of way but it seems to work very well for that environment. They've chosen sort of smaller but high rise building. I remember when Mission Bay was being developed and also plans for the Northern Waterfront in San Francisco, that there was some debate about the sort of lower bulkier

buildings, for instance, that were chosen for Mission Bay as perhaps not the most elegant solution, that perhaps they could have chosen more of a Vancouver model for the buildings that were developed there. I wonder, in your planning work and also engaging with the development of Mission Bay, if you were privy to any of these sort of conversations about what the built environment would eventually look like and if you had a particular opinion about that.

14-00:20:41  
Newman:

Not really, no. I didn't have anything to do with the design of Mission Bay. I think some buildings there are much better than others. I don't think that San Francisco has been particularly distinguished in the buildings that have been built here. There are some that are really very, very nice but I think that the planning code and the zoning code pretty much limits what can be done. And I have said if I were the mayor of this city, I would have taken some rather strong steps in the area of the planning department. I talk to developers all the time. I'm on the board of a real estate company. It can take people two years to get a permit. I think it's unfair. I think that the permit process should be one to protect the citizens, but on the other hand, I think it should be there to facilitate good development in the city without putting people through the hurdles that they have to go through from civil servants being difficult and I have always said that if it meets the code then you should be allowed to build it. I don't say just willy-nilly go out and build anything. But if you don't want to see something built, change the code. The growth of the city depends on a certain amount of progress and impeding progress by putting developers and builders through these huge caverns of paperwork and do it and do it again and do it again and do it again. I've heard people just throw up their hands and say, "I'm not going to do business in this city." I don't mean to be just totally free about doing anything but, again, looking at the ultra, I don't think you have to be so difficult that you can't get anything done here.

14-00:23:50  
Stein:

One project that comes to mind, especially given the Gap building, is the Fisher's attempt to build an art museum in the Presidio, which did not go through, right?

14-00:24:03  
Newman:

Well, that was public. It kind of broke my heart. Both my wife and I, we were on national television because we felt that Fisher was trying to do something constructive, something artistic for the city. Granted, the location might not have been the most desirable. On the other hand, the Trust of the Presidio had said that they wanted to make the Presidio more welcoming. They wanted to make it a place where people would go and picnic and have lectures and concerts and things like that, and that a beautiful art museum would have played a role in doing that. Who goes to the Presidio to see anything? It's one of the most beautiful sights in San Francisco. You've got the Disney museum, and that's a very lovely facility, but I don't think it's drawing a lot of people there. They go to see it once and that's it. But if you had had the Fisher

collection there, it would have just been another great attraction to bring people to San Francisco. Instead of that, it's going to be a wing of the Modern Art Museum. I don't think it's going to add a lot to the character of the city. It'll just be part of a museum.

14-00:25:48

Stein: One thing. Just an aside about the Gap building that was built. The art gallery's on the bottom floor and then that beautiful Richard Serra in the atrium. I imagine that it was a very specific demand that they had on the architecture.

14-00:26:09

Newman: Yes.

14-00:26:10

Stein: They were lovely. As someone who's worked in that building, certainly appreciated those touches.

14-00:26:16

Newman: Yes. No, it's beautiful. And that's truly one of the great collections in the world. Don loved living in the art. Everywhere you went, you'd see it.

14-00:26:31

Stein: Yes. So unless there are other specific stories that you wanted to make sure that we get recorded, we thought that we could move to a sort of reflection or wrap-up, which is difficult to do after fourteen hours. But I thought maybe we could start with a general question. Does the word retirement mean anything to you?

14-00:26:58

Newman: I have to tell you this, that I'm busier now than I think I have been in the last twenty years. But most of it is community work and there are so many things that need to be done. In my advanced age, I think that keeping active and keeping around young people is a very important part of keeping your life meaningful. I mentioned this before. I'm a very happy man. I'm married to the most wonderful woman. We live in the best place in the United States, the best country in the world, and all I want to do is to be constructive and do as many good things as I can. I'm on the board of the SF General Hospital now. I'm doing a lot of work for the veterans. I'm doing the board of the City College Foundation and I don't know where the time goes. It's just fun. We have a good time. And I go to the office every day and have still a lot of friends. There's not much that I can ask for. I've still got my good health, my head is all together and I'll be eighty-nine next month and I can't think of anything that I could ask for.

14-00:28:41

Stein: When you look back on your career and on your public service, your work has spanned a remarkable breadth of interests and of areas. Do you look back on

one particular aspect of that? Do you pick out one legacy that you think is the most important or that you're the most proud of?

14-00:29:11

Newman:

It's very hard to focus on any one thing. Ellen and I have often talked about what we would have done if we had decided to live in Newman. What we could have done. We were both people of energy. To make that a more dynamic place. I enjoyed my years down there. I loved my years at Joseph Magnin. I pride myself on my integrity. Never have done anything dishonest. And I've always been able to stand total scrutiny. Kevin Starr is an author. I've gotten to know Kevin. He wrote an article where he said I should run for mayor. Well, I didn't want to be a public elected person because I felt I could do more just as a volunteer than having to jump from one position to another.

Some of the things that I treasure was the fact I became an Eagle Scout as a boy. I treasure my military experience. I prepared to give my life for my country. The smartest thing I ever did was to marry my wife. And then I'm proud of the role that I played at Joseph Magnin. I helped it to become a very good company, which it certainly was. It would have been without me, but I did help it along. I certainly made a lot of friends over the years. I'm proud of the fact that I was able to contribute to some extent to the City of San Francisco through political affiliations. I don't know. It's just been good all the way along.

14-00:31:45

Stein:

I'm curious about the motivation for your public service and for the energetic efforts that you've given. I think it's often rare to meet people who consistently give so much for so many years so consistently. Do you ever reflect on what the motivation is for that or where that seed comes from?

14-00:32:12

Newman:

To a large extent it's family. My wife is a doer. We've always said if there's a vacuum, let's try to fill it. And there are so many needs, that if you can play a small role in it, do it. When the opportunity presented itself or the need presented itself, you say, "Well, how can I help to alleviate that? How can I make it better?" Just full speed ahead.

14-00:32:54

Stein:

I would also love to ask you to reflect a little bit on the city of San Francisco, which has been such a consistent part of your life. You've certainly seen it change dramatically both in terms of business culture, in terms of politics, the fine arts scene. Do you have thoughts on the way the city has changed the direction that it's going in over the past eighty-eight years?

14-00:33:22

Newman:

As I said before, I think it's lost a lot of its major businesses. It's fostered a lot of them. You can look at some of the major companies that started here, like the Gap. Several of the big brokerage firms that started here, the Bank of

America started here. To some extent, Wells Fargo started here. Chevron started here. But those big companies—Transamerica—they've moved. The Bank of America being sent to Charlotte was just a heartbreaking thing for people in San Francisco. Never should have happened. Moving these big companies out has made a significant difference to the city. As I said, you go down on the corner of Powell & Geary today, you wouldn't hear English spoken by one-tenth of the people. This is tourist heaven and the people love to come here. It's everybody's favorite city. I'm afraid that, in a way, it's becoming a city of lower income people and higher income people, and that the middle class is sort of moving out. It's not as family oriented as it was when I was a child. In those days, every home had a family. Like today you're seeing more and more apartments built. It's much more single oriented.

As far as the economy of the city, I think the city's doing quite well compared to other cities. Real estate prices have held up very well. There's lots happening here. All you have to do is go up and down the street to see the amount of construction that's going on. It isn't necessarily big things. A lot of remodeling, smaller things happening. UCSF is a very big part. That's expanded dramatically and it's getting bigger. So science and technology have become, I would say, one of the driving forces in the city, which it wasn't years ago. One of the things that's disappeared, and I'm sorry to say, is the home owned business. When Joseph Magnin Co. was in business you had I. Magnin, Joseph Magnin, Ransahoff, Liebes's, Livingston's, Davis Schonwasser. Dozens of home owned companies. And the owners of those companies took a personal interest in the city. They played a role in the downtown community in influencing the city. Today, almost all of the retail firms are divisions of other major companies around the country. Not that they're all bad but you don't have that personal input from the taxpayers that we had then. There have been some great new developments and I think there are going to be some more around Market Street. The Westfield Center has been very successful. Upper Market, there's a lot of development programs that are being planned along those lines. I'd say twenty years from now San Francisco will be even better than it is today. I think you're going to see where the football stadium is hopefully be able to build a stadium. Keep the 49ers here.

Hunter's Point is going to be a major new housing center. I think weather wise it's one of the nicest parts of the city and I think you'll see some very nice things happening down there. I think all along Third Street Corridor you'll see development along that area. So there's growth potential here but I don't see industry coming back. It's still a remarkable city. When you think, here we are, a city of 780,000 people, you've got a great ballet, a great opera, a great symphony, wonderful museums, terrific restaurants. It's just a great place to live. You couldn't tear me away from this place with a team of horses.

14-00:39:46

Stein: It also sounds like you've found ways to keep community a very active part of your life. One of your sons was telling me about your community walks. I don't know if you could tell me a little bit more about that. It sounds fun.

14-00:40:01

Newman: Well, we just love the Presidio and every Sunday we all have dogs and so we just agree to walk through the Presidio and we get the news of the week. People come and join us. We just have a good time.

14-00:40:18

Stein: So some things haven't changed.

14-00:40:22

Newman: No. And we go to baseball games and we go to the football games. I go to Cal games and my wife goes to some Stanford games. We're going to the baseball game tonight. So there's a lot happening around here. And there's good theater. You want to go to that. We went to see Peter Pan the other night. That's a great show. And ACT. Mr. Magnin was instrumental in bringing ACT to San Francisco. So we still go to opening nights of that. And we just have a great time.

14-00:41:03

Stein: Do you have any other thoughts that you want to put down before we come to a close?

14-00:41:08

Newman: No. I hope that my life will be interesting to other people and maybe give them a model of participating in the good of the community, the good of the country and just being a good person.

14-00:41:34

Stein: I don't think you have to worry about that. I think it will be a model to anybody who comes across this interview. I can't thank you enough for—

14-00:41:43

Newman: Well, I can't thank you enough.

14-00:41:44

Stein: —for your participation. You've really been generous and a wonderful storyteller and really made us feel at home here. So thank you so much.

14-00:41:54

Newman: Well, listen, you're like my family now. You know everything there is to know.

[End of Interview]